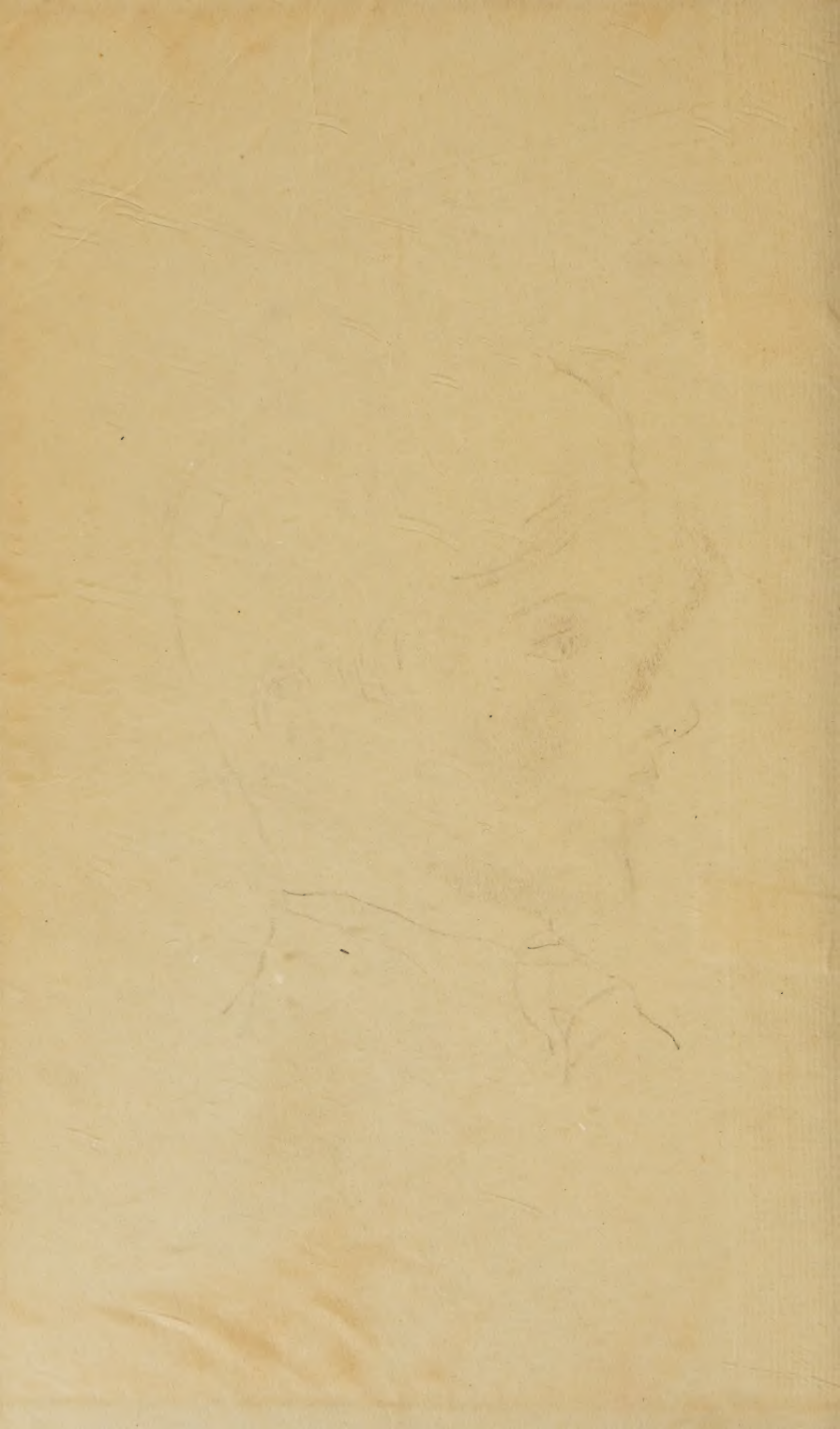

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George Gershwin

MYSTICAL PHENOMENA

MYSTICAL PHENOMENA

COMPARED WITH THEIR HUMAN AND DIABOLICAL COUNTERFEITS

A TREATISE ON MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF ST TERESA SET FORTH BY THE CARMELITE CONGRESS OF 1923 AT MADRID

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EXTRACT FROM POPE BENEDICT XV'S APPROBATION OF THE SECOND FRENCH EDITION

" . . . This book is, indeed, the ripe fruit of your long familiarity with a subject as important as it is difficult. It certainly cannot fail to remove objections and to throw light on controversial matters; it will remain, moreover, a valuable work into which priests in general and spiritual directors in particular will be able to delve abundantly in the accomplishment of one of the most delicate and difficult duties of their mission to souls. . . ."

PETER, CARD. GASPARRI.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

WHEN Mgr. Farges was chosen to be the Founder and first Principal of the University Seminary at Angers, in 1898, its episcopal patrons suggested that he might give a course of lectures on ascetic and mystical theology which would set forth the traditional teaching of the Church and at the same time direct special attention to present-day questions raised by the progress of contemporary science.

He lectured there from 1899 to 1905—seven years. The course was at that time a novelty; but to-day the need of these studies for the higher education of the clergy and for Christian apologists is universally admitted. Thus it is that the Gregorian University and the *Collegio Angelico* at Rome have quite recently inaugurated a similar chair.

It is this course of mystical theology which the author, in response to the oft-repeated requests of many old pupils, has decided to publish in the present volume; reserving to a later occasion that dealing with asceticism.

OH, MIGHTY SECRETS OF GOD! NEVER SHOULD I WEARY OF TRYING TO EXPLAIN THEM IF I THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE TO SUCCEED! I WOULD WRITE A THOUSAND FOOLISH THINGS THAT ONE MIGHT BE TO THE POINT, IF ONLY IT MIGHT MAKE US PRAISE GOD MORE.

PERHAPS GOD HAS GIVEN ME A CLEARER INSIGHT INTO THE MATTER THAN I HAD FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. I MAY BE ENTIRELY MISTAKEN ON THE SUBJECT, BOTH THEN AND NOW; BUT NEVER DO I WILFULLY SAY WHAT IS UNTRUE. NO, BY THE MERCY OF GOD, I WOULD RATHER DIE A THOUSAND TIMES THAN TELL A FALSEHOOD; I SPEAK OF THE MATTER AS I UNDERSTAND IT.

I SHALL ONLY SPEAK OF WHAT I HAVE LEARNT BY MY OWN EXPERIENCE, OR HAVE WITNESSED IN OTHERS.

GOD DESIRES THAT NO LIMITS SHOULD BE SET TO HIS WORK.

ST TERESA OF JESUS.[1]

[1] *Interior Castle*, 5th M., ch. i; 4th M., ch. ii. *Way of Perfection*, Introduction. *Int. Castle*, 1st M., ch. i. [The quotations from St Teresa and St John of the Cross throughout this book are taken from the translations made by the Benedictines of Stanbrook, and published by Thomas Baker, London. See Bibliography.]

PREFACE TO THE FIRST FRENCH EDITION

GLYCERA the flower-girl, whose art so charmed the gentle St Francis de Sales, used to make ever-varied nosegays for which she always used the same flowers.

We need, therefore, offer our readers no apology for presenting them with flowers that are already familiar; the more so in that the flower-garden of theology, whence they are gathered, excludes, on traditional principles, new growths. Novelty, be it ever so attractive, is always open to the suspicion of being false: *nova, pulchra, falsa.*

Nevertheless, the most rigorous tradition in no way forbids grouping the flowers of the saints in a new way; nor does it prohibit us from submitting them to still closer examination, nor from comparing them with the exotic growths, at times brightly coloured but too often poisonous, found in other latitudes and other worlds. From this point of view alone may we hope to obtain a few fresh ideas and new arguments for the defence of the Church against the ignorance and confusion of science falsely so-called.

Would that this contrast of wonders truly divine with their simulations in nature or their diabolical counterfeits may make their greatness and beauty, as well as the incomparable favours obtained through the sanctity of our mystic saints, stand out the more resplendently. For they are the loveliest wonder of the sanctuary of God, causing us to exclaim with the Psalmist: *Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis!*

The means which we propose to adopt towards the attainment of our object may be summed up thus: we shall confine ourselves as closely as possible to St Teresa and St Thomas Aquinas, without omitting the other great mystic saints, giving preference in the description of mystical phenomena to St Teresa, of whom it may be said that she eclipses all others by the depth and clearness of her psychological analyses. The authority which they enjoy in the Church is incomparable; and even free-thinkers such as Ribot and Delacroix cite them with confidence and respect.

For the interpretation of such facts, at the constant bidding of the Church, we follow St Thomas; because his philosophy is but the systematizing of the "natural metaphysics of the human intelligence," as Bergson himself has felt forced to confess. After having made clear the enigmas of nature and of this world, this philosophy proceeds to expound for us those, still more wonderful as they are, which belong to the supernatural, and throws unexpected light on the most obscure mystical phenomena.

In order to reach a proper understanding of that which St Teresa experienced and described so well, long years should be spent in the school of St Thomas. These two geniuses must here suffice: relying on their strong wings, even the most diffident may dare to soar.

PARIS, *March* 7, 1920.
(*Feast of St Thomas Aquinas*).

PREFACE TO THE SECOND FRENCH EDITION

IN spite of the popular demand following on the very favourable reception of the first edition of this book, we have been forced to postpone this second edition owing to a somewhat lengthy controversy in the press with which we were obliged to deal. Moreover, we were informed that a Congress of Discalced Carmelites was about to be held to determine the fundamental principles of the spirituality of St Teresa. This Congress eventually met, with considerable *éclat*, at Madrid on March 1, 1923, and after serious debates set out the fundamental principles of Teresian mysticism, together with certain conclusions which we feel it our duty to reproduce and to discuss, for they will not fail to make their mark in the history of mystical theology.

We were already in agreement with these conclusions, and in order respectfully to conform to them—for we glory in our adherence to the school of St Teresa—we have nothing to correct in our first work, but have only to complete it. We are in perfect accord with the Congress, and are proud to congratulate ourselves on this fact.

This edition, then, does not put forward any alteration in our teaching, but merely certain supplementary elucidations. And in order not to interfere with the instructional section we have gathered all the discussions together in a second *apologetic* section attached to the first part, to which we add in an appendix divers documents, such as the conclusions of the Carmelite Conference, with a short commentary thereon,

We may venture to hope that after this solemn act of the sons of St Teresa and St John of the Cross, minds may be filled with light and hearts with calm and peace, and that unity may result which is so desirable throughout the great Teresian family.

PARIS, *November* 1, 1923.
(*Feast of All Saints*).

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MYSTICAL PHENOMENA

INTRODUCTION

Mystical Science—Its Method—Its Origin—Its Object—Distinction between Ordinary and Extraordinary, Active and Passive Ways —Its Definition—Its Use—Its Necessity for Directors and Apologists—Its Dangers—Division of its Study—Its Sources.

MYSTICAL theology is a *true science*. Like all science worthy of the name, it is not only an accumulation of facts, but also a gathering together of explanatory theories founded on assured principles, which are methodically bound into a single whole by means of reason. In fact, every scientific system, like a living organism, is made up of three divisions: *unity* of the whole, *differentiation* of the parts, *synthesis* of the parts into the whole.

Mystical theology is furthermore an *experimental* science. Nothing therein can be accused of being an *a priori* judgement: neither the facts, which surpass human anticipation, nor the principles, which are obtained from Christian revelation and by generalizing from the facts observed. "It is not," proclaimed Gerson, "an abstract science; it is an experimental science: the experience to which it appeals is neither that of the senses nor of the reason, but the experience of facts which occur in the deepest intimacy of the religious soul."[1] To seek to treat this science *a priori*, then, would be to disfigure, and even mutilate it.[2]

[1] Quoted by Victor Cousin, *Histoire gén. de la philosophie*, 5th lesson.

[2] Examples which the perusal of what follows will enable to be better understood. It is only by the observation of the facts that the *active ways* could be distinguished from the *passive ways* "where it is God who does all," as St Teresa says, asking only for our consent;—that *acquired* or active contemplation could be distinguished from contemplation properly so called, *infused* and passive;—and thereby that the twofold character of the ways leading to union with God and to sanctity by different means could be distinguished. The *a priori* studies of certain theologians who are fond of handy simplifications have denied this duality, and distorted the observed facts by their explanations.

Method to be followed.—This will be equally far from a purely *descriptive* method, which describes the facts without explaining them, and from an obstinate *a priori* method which distorts them in order to bring them willy-nilly within the compass of preconceived theories. In the presence of a well-attested mystical phenomenon we shall never say, " It is impossible !" God has infinitely varying ways of communicating himself to souls, which cannot be comprised within our paltry school formulas nor our over-simple and incomplete classifications, and which would therefore seem impossible to those who have not enjoyed these inner experiences. And so, after the example of St Teresa, we shall be very sober and reserved in our theological judgements, when they are not certain but only more or less hypothetical, without absolutely refraining from them when they may seem capable of accounting sufficiently for the observed facts.

Not only is mysticism a true science, but it shares with theology the legitimate claim to be the *queen of sciences.*

All merely human science is necessarily confined to the lights of reason and experience only. Theology alone adds to these natural data the light of divine revelation. Thus, it raises the genius of man to the region of the knowledge of God, yet without his in any way abandoning his own reason, which it respects as a divine gift. These two rays of light, reason and faith, springing both from the same source of infinite truth, far from being opposed, complete one another and harmonise into a marvellous synthetic whole.

But mysticism is a *branch* of Catholic theology, for the following reason:

Theology in general is the science of God through the light of revelation. In this it is distinguished from natural theology or theodicy, which is confined to the purely rational study of God.

It comprises two sections, *dogmatic* and *moral*, according as to whether it teaches us what we must *believe* or what we must *do*, in order to attain to our last end, which is to return to God from whom we came: in other words, to work out our salvation.

Again, moral theology, when limited to the consideration of human actions and conscience, of general or particular laws, such as the commandments of God or of the Church, or, in a word, to the knowledge of Christian *duty* and of the means to its performance, is called *general moral theology*.

If, on the other hand, it extends beyond the precepts strictly needed for salvation, to the counsels of Christian perfection and a knowledge of Christian ideals, it becomes *ascetic* theology, from the Greek *ἀσκεῖν*, signifying self-exertion or a striving to reach an ideal.

Finally, if, rising yet higher, it no longer aims at directing souls in the ordinary active ways of perfection, but in those that are extraordinary, passive, and full of mystery (*μυστήριον*), which are sometimes granted by God to certain privileged persons, it becomes *mystical* theology.

Mystical theology, then, is a separate branch of ascetic theology, as the latter is a branch of moral, and as moral theology is itself a branch of general theology.

This *progressive distinction* between these different branches of theology has slowly evolved in the course of time, as with all other human sciences—division of labour being one of the elements of progress.

In the beginning all were mingled together under the one generic name philosophy, or the love of wisdom. Later on a distinction arose between physics and metaphysics. Physics in time became subdivided into a number of more or less ancient branches. Chemistry, for instance, has only recently become separate from physics. Two centuries ago these names meant the same thing; nevertheless, the realities observed have not changed, but their classification has become more precise; and this precision in every branch of science has brought about closer attention to detail with better results. Henceforth each section of the sciences which depend on observation has everything to gain by remaining distinct and moving freely in its own sphere, while remaining united with the others like branches to one stem.

It is the same with regard to theological science. Gradually as each section became more developed it required to be treated separately, without, however, becoming disconnected or claiming for itself complete autonomy.

Thus mysticism derives its life continuously from the sap of Christian morality, as does the latter in turn from that of Christian dogma. And since it is thought that must produce and direct action, dogma should likewise inspire morality, and the principles laid down by morality continue to direct asceticism and mysticism in the new spheres in which they move.

Moral theology became detached from dogmatics and

casuistry towards the middle of the modern period, but it still embraced ascetic theology in its general scope. It was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that ascetic theology became a separate branch of moral theology, and that finally mystical theology came in turn to be distinguished from ascetic.

This is most important. It will be seen that, in order to ascertain the nature and exact boundaries of these various sciences, it is not enough to examine into ancient writers with a view to finding the meaning which they attach to the words *mystic*, *ascetic*, or *contemplation*. Their testimony will always be ambiguous and therefore of little value; and the oversight of this in certain otherwise estimable contemporary writers has rendered their arguments faulty. At first, and for many centuries, these words had, in fact, a very wide meaning, which has only narrowed itself, little by little, as theology has become subdivided.[1]

It has been said that mysticism became detached from asceticism in order to study exclusively the *extraordinary ways* of perfection, leaving to asceticism the study of the

[1] We give here a few examples, although they cannot be fully understood until the end of this work. St Thomas (1227–1274) often uses the word *contemplation* in its widest sense. The contemplative life is only the contrast to the active life: "Contemplation," he says, "has *three divisions*: spiritual *reading*, *meditation* and *prayer*" (II–II, q. clxxx, a. 3, ad 4, etc.). In this sense, truly enough, contemplation is accessible to all! Four centuries later the terminology is still unfixed. St Francis de Sales (1567–1622), in his *Treatise on the Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. ii, calls meditation "the first degree of mystical theology." It is evident that the word *mystical* is used here in a very wide sense, that of *spiritual life*. All writers to-day are agreed in classing "meditation" outside mysticism, its most remote ascetic preparation. Again, in the first chapter of the same book he remarks that "mystical theology is nothing else than prayer." Here the word *prayer* is again used in a very general sense, for mystical prayer has its own special character. Furthermore, the word *contemplation*, which to-day is restricted to mystical or infused contemplation, is defined as being "a loving attention to God," which is much too wide. But all these contradictions in words are in no way a contradiction in doctrine, as it is easy to see from the context and the general spirit of his writings. Here, indeed, the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. What we have just said of St Francis may be applied for the same reason to older writers; even to St John of the Cross and to St Teresa, although the latter's terminology is much more precise. It was the genius of Bossuet (1627–1704) which began the definite separation of mystical science from ascetic; just as, in the following century, the genius of Lavoisier (1743–1794) was to separate chemistry from physics. But the new and more exact terminology which has resulted does not signify a new teaching.

ordinary ways. This common distinction is not false, but the terms *ordinary* and *extraordinary* appear to us to be still too vague. To say that a fact is rare or frequent is not sufficient to enable us to know its nature and to define it. Furthermore, as will be seen later, certain mystical states are perhaps not so rare as we may think, and their rarity or frequency in no way affects their essential character. We must, therefore, look for other distinctions. A clear definition is all the more necessary since, if mysticism is to be detached from asceticism, to become a distinct science, the first condition must be to limit its scope; to erect, as it were, a mutual barrier between it and its neighbour, otherwise they run the risk of overlapping through reciprocal encroachment, which would end in most regrettable confusion. Such is the case to-day.

In fact, this confusion has not always been avoided by most eminent Catholic writers, such as Père Gratry and many others. It has even ended by finding a place in the ordinary language of literature. Every impulse towards a perfect life or an ideal is imputed to mysticism; even more, all piety, every religious sentiment, is labelled mystic, so that the word is made to embrace every manifestation of Christian, or even simply religious, life. Yet nothing is more inexact, as we shall see.

To make this clearer, let us recall to our minds the classical idea of the *three ways*. The religious soul, in its ascent towards God, begins by freeing itself from the bonds of sin and evil habit. During this struggle, usually painful and laborious, the predominating virtue, that which has the greatest force, is the fear of God and his judgements, "the beginning of wisdom," as says the Psalmist: *initium sapientiae timor Domini*. This first preparatory phase of the Christian life has been called the way of purification, or *purgative way*.

The second begins when the soul, being freer from the trammels of sense and concupiscence, endeavours to obtain a better understanding of revealed truths and to make them enter into its life by the positive practice of the virtues, thus reflecting in its conduct the light of faith. Whence the name *illuminative way* given to this period, in which the dominant note is no longer fear, but a more or less selfish love of God, Christian hope.

Finally, in the third period, the pure love of God opens for the soul the vast field of the perfect life, known as the *unitive way*. To please God—this is the habitual yearning of such a soul. All other selfish motives are effaced, or at least subordinated

to this one desire. Although the soul has not yet achieved union with eternal blessedness, and is still far short of so doing, nevertheless this state is like a far-off foretaste thereof; it is a final stage, a state of relative repose on this earth, and thus we may rightly call it the unitive and perfect life.

This distinction between the three states or ways, corresponding with the outset, the progress, and the achievement of spiritual life, must not be taken in too absolute a sense. Doubtless there is no hard-and-fast boundary, which would exclude all hope from fear or all love from hope. Nor, indeed, is any state so perfect that no return of temptation or struggle is absolutely assured. It is enough for these three states to be thus distinguished by their dominant note, and such, in this sense, is the teaching of theologians, be they Thomists, Suarezians, or Scotists. Moreover, Innocent XI, in 1687, condemned as temerarious a proposition of Molinos, which denied this fundamental distinction between the three ways, and treated it as absurd.

The "unitive way," however, to which reference has just been made, *branches off* in two different directions, both of which lead the soul towards its ever-closer union with God, but by different methods and roads. The one is *active*, and calls for our own efforts at all costs; the other *passive*, under the hand of God, in a very short moment, and calls only for our consent. The former is the ordinary and longer road, the other a "short cut." In the one we walk on foot; in the other God bears us on the wings of his grace, without any merit of our own, other than our readiness to be led.

St Teresa never ceased to warn her sisters against the mistake of thinking that there is but one way of attaining to union and perfection: "As I told you," she said to them, "it is important to understand that God does not lead all souls by the same way . . . thus, because all the nuns in this convent practise prayer, it does not follow that they must all be contemplatives. . . . She who is without it, yet follows the counsels I have given, will attain great perfection. It may be that she will gain far more merit, as she has to work harder on her own account."[1]

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xvii; *cf.* xviii, xix, xx. *Interior Castle*, 1st M., ch. i, and 6th M., ch. ix. The dividing of the ways is therefore not an invention of the Jesuits and of Scaramelli, but a fully experienced fact definitely declared by St Teresa and Benedict XIV (see 2nd apologetic section, ch. iii, iv, v). It has also been proclaimed by the Carmelite Congress (see Appendix VI).

Undoubtedly, adds our Saint a little later,[1] Jesus says to all: *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink*,[2] but "he gives [this water] in many ways to those who try to follow him." And, moreover,[3] she expressly teaches that union with God may come about either in a passive and mystical manner, with suspension of the powers, or in an active and non-mystical manner. It is this latter mode of union only which she never ceased to ask of God, her whole life through, by her own express avowal.

We shall return to all these texts later; here it is enough to indicate at the start the distinction between the two ways by one of their most apparent marks. If the soul follows the ordinary ways of Providence, it remains always *active* and master of itself, without any suspension of its powers; on the other hand, in the extraordinary ways, it becomes at certain moments *passive* in the hands of the Holy Spirit, who takes possession of it, suspends its powers more or less, and acts in it and through it. Such, for example, are the mystical phenomena of infused recollection, of the prayer of quiet, full union, ecstasy, raptures, and, so much the more, visions, prophecies, and all the other marvellous happenings which depend in no way on the will of souls thus favoured, but solely on the good pleasure of God.

If we desire to produce them ourselves, we are not even slightly successful. In the ordinary way, however, the practice of the virtues depends entirely on the personal effort of the Christian, on his merits and prayers, and needs only the co-operation of ordinary divine grace, which is never refused to prayer and merit.

For instance, every Christian is able to practise interior acts of penitence, of faith, hope, and charity, or exterior acts of virtue, such as visiting the poor. It will always be possible for him, with good will, to succeed at least a little, and the more generous efforts he makes, the more new graces will he merit for succeeding even better, as St Thomas says: *qui plus conatur, plus habet de gratia*.[4] But the phenomena of quiet, ecstasy, rapture, or even those of vision and prophecy, depend in no way on our personal efforts, nor even on our merits. They are gifts of God entirely gratuitous, because they are necessary neither to salvation nor to that Christian perfection towards which we ought to strive, and are *infused* by his grace into certain privileged souls.

[1] *Way*, ch. xx.
[2] Joan. vii 37.
[3] *Castle*, 5th M.
[4] *In Matt.* xxv 15.

The masters of asceticism have proclaimed an infinite variety of *methods* by which souls may advance in the ordinary ways of union with God by charity; but in spite of their variety they have this in common, that they call for spiritual *action* or effort, being the result of *co-operating* grace or grace *operating with our help*.

The Benedictine school counsels and practises liturgical devotion, the usages of Christian worship; the Seraphic school aims at affective devotion by prayer; the Dominican school, after St Thomas, promotes dogma; Redemptorists render piety stronger by the thought of our last end; the school of St Ignatius aims at a militant and disciplined sanctity; that of the Oratory, at one mortified and austere; St Teresa and the Carmelites foster a psychological mysticism which searches into the innermost recesses of the human soul; the eucharistic school insists on the highest of all means, the Eucharist; Père Grignon de Montfort promotes devotion to the Blessed Virgin; the school of St Francis de Sales tends to enkindle a tender, sensitive, and human piety; in a word, all the masters of the spiritual life, throughout the centuries until our day, who have laboured to weave and adorn the incomparably rich and variegated golden robe of the Church of Christ, have chosen only active and laborious workmen.[1] One school only, that of the Quietists, of which the Church has not approved, has sought to preach passiveness and to take as its motto *leave God to act*, and act ourselves as little as possible, thus countering the words of our Lord: *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away*.

We shall have occasion to return to this error, the shadow of which throws into higher light the fundamental activity of the Christian and perfect life.

There are, however, *exceptional* and *passive* states. But this passiveness, far from being voluntary or arising from the soul's free choice, must come from the good pleasure of God, who takes hold of the already more or less perfect—at times of the very imperfect—to convert them into vessels of election and to fill them with heavenly light and with most marvellous gifts. Here, then, begins the domain of mystical theology. It is from the moment at which there comes into play the grace of God *operating alone* without our concurrence, when, as St Teresa says,[2] *it is God that does all*, that the soul ceases to be com-

[1] *Regina in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate:* Psalm xliv 10
[2] *Way*, ch. xxv.

pletely active and must abandon itself to the guidance of God and to those extraordinary states to which it may please him to raise it; its acquiescence alone is needed.

Here is a comparison which has already been made use of to fix the boundaries of these two domains.

The birds which fly through the air that enwraps the earth rise the higher, the more vigorous the beating of their wings. But beyond that stratum of air, in ethereal space, they are no longer able to make any way, even with redoubled effort. There they find a new and totally different region in which they cannot even breathe or live. God alone can bear them up there: it is useless for them to beat their wings: they must give up the old methods and take to new. Then only is it that one must let God act, and act oneself as little as possible.

Mystical science being thus clearly distinguished from ascetic, we are able to *define* it thus: *the experimental and rational study, in accordance with revelation, of all states in which the soul is* PASSIVE *in relation to God*, thus realizing to the letter the words of St Paul rapt into the third heaven: " It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me ": *Vivo jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.*

Here is another definition, somewhat longer but fundamentally identical, given by M. Ribet: " It is the science which treats of the supernatural phenomena, either inward or outward, which prepare, accompany or follow the *passive* attraction of souls towards God and by God, that is to say, divine contemplation; which classifies and justifies them by the authority of Scripture, the Doctors, and reason; distinguishes them from parallel phenomena due to the action of Satan, and from analogous facts which are purely natural; and finally, which traces out practical rules for spiritual guidance in these sublime but perilous ascents."[1]

The same writer elsewhere remarks that the names *ascetic* and *mystic* are well chosen to designate these two sciences and to show their opposition. The first (*ἀσκεῖν*) expresses the effort of the soul which exerts itself towards the perfect life. The second (*μυστήριον*) denotes the mysterious influence which at times operates in us, yet without us: God, the devil, or nature. Hence the necessity for the discernment of spirits.

Doubtless the great mystics of past ages have not taken these definitions as the starting-point of their works, because defini-

[1] *La mystique divine*, vol. i, p. 15.

tions are the fruit of science, which constantly becomes more definite by the method of discovery and research.

Once found, science adopts the method of teaching, which follows an opposite course, and then takes as its starting-point those definitions last formulated.

But if our definition of mystical theology is not explicitly found in *ancient writers*, it may nevertheless be evolved from them with the completest certainty. Everything they say on the subject presupposes it and takes it for granted. Sometimes, even, it is clearly stated.

Thus, St Teresa, in her letter to Fr. Rodrigo Alvarez, in February, 1576, begins by describing the mystical states in these terms: " I call supernatural (or mystical) that which no skill or effort of ours, however much we labour, can attain to, though we should prepare ourselves for it, and that preparation must be of great service." And this fundamental thought constantly flows from the pen of our Saint: " The prayer of quiet," she states in the *Way of Perfection*, chap. xxxi, " is a supernatural state to which no industry of our own can raise us."

The same conception of mysticism is, at bottom, to be found in all the other great theologians, especially in the descriptions which they give of manifestly supernatural phenomena—although it is not always emphasized and therefore not always apparent at first sight.

Finally, the experimental data which in the pages to follow we shall have to set out in analysing the different mystical states will amply justify this our preliminary definition.

The nature of mystical science, thus understood, demonstrates the *usefulness* and paramount *importance* of its study for the guidance of souls, for ourselves, or for the defence of the Church.

Fr. Alvarez de Paz states that the science of mysticism is useful not only to directors, but to those souls themselves whom God calls to these extraordinary states. Gifted with deep humility and perhaps excessive prudence, they fear to launch out into the unknown. It is good that they should know beforehand those ways which others have passed along before them, and the benefits they may derive from their example, in order to render more perfect their own union with God: it is good also for them to be warned of the dangers and illusions with which these ways are strewn. This previous instruction will calm their anxieties, reassure them in their fears, render them more trustful and more yielding to the action of God.

However useful it may be to these chosen souls, nevertheless it is not indispensable to them. It is necessary only to those *directors* whose duty it is to guide and sustain them in the steep paths which lead to the highest peaks of Christian perfection.

It is, indeed, a recognized principle with all masters of the spiritual life, that no one, however perfect, can be exempted from the providential law of direction. It is for the director, therefore, to pronounce in the last resort as to the divine, natural, or diabolical character of the states of soul of those whom it is his mission to direct. It is for him to unveil their illusions, or, on the contrary, to encourage them and give them confidence, to sustain them in weakness, to solve their doubts, to point out perils and dangers, and to indicate the sure way.

Yet how can the director fulfil this delicate and formidable mission if he be not deeply grounded in the knowledge of mystical science, if he be not even able to distinguish between the ordinary ways and those extraordinary and wonderful paths along which God invites a great number to walk—not only in the cloister, but even in the world ?

A director, no matter how sincerely pious he may be, however assiduous in his daily prayer and all his religious exercises, if he does not know that beyond his ordinary, meditative and affective prayer there is a prayer of simple regard, called *active or acquired* contemplation, and beyond this again another contemplation, truly *infused or passive*, granted by God to whom it pleases him—such a director is a man who does not know his business at all; he is incompetent, and may do grave harm to those entrusted to his care. He may paralyze the action of God on such chosen souls, and keep them, contrary to their vocation, in an inferior state, where they will mark time instead of making progress: they will be fortunate, indeed, if this ignorant director does not welcome with a sceptical smile, perhaps with jest and sarcasm, that which may well be a veritable gift of God.

On the contrary, again, directors may be found whose simplicity and credulity are such, that they allow themselves to be duped by hallucinations and mental maladies, perhaps by the trickery of sorry jesters, or, what is still worse, end by becoming the puppets of imposture and of the witchcrafts of Satan.

" Some confessors and spiritual directors," writes St John of the Cross, " because they have no perception or experience of these ways, are a hindrance and an evil, rather than a help to such souls; they are like the builders of Babel; who, when required to furnish certain materials, furnished others of a

very different sort, because they knew not the language of those around them, and thus the building was stopped."[1]

We know that the greatest trial experienced by St Teresa was her inability for a long time to find a good director who could understand her. None were able to grasp what she wished to confide to them. She herself complained of it to God with bitter tears and broken heart.

After so cruel a trial, here is the advice—or rather formal command—which she gave to all the superiors of her Order:

" For the love of our Lord," she cries, " I beg the Superior to maintain this holy liberty, and to get permanent leave from the Bishop or Provincial for the nuns to have, besides their ordinary confessors, *learned* priests to whom they may all speak and open their souls, especially if their own priests, though holy, are not great scholars. God forbid that the religious should be directed entirely by one priest if he is ill-instructed, however saintly his spirit may appear, and perhaps may be in reality. Learning gives great light on all points; it is combined with holiness in some men."[2]

If the reader desires to know the reason in greater detail, here is what is added by Fr. Surin: " Your confessor may be an extremely clever theologian, yet be very little instructed in true spirituality, which nevertheless is the knowledge needed for the guidance of souls towards perfection. The reason is that spirituality consists in matters which are not dealt with in the schools (of theology). The foundations of all the spiritual truths are well taught there. . . . But as in building a house it is not enough to lay good foundations, but one must also construct the rooms and put on the roof; so in the same manner for the spiritual building, it does not suffice to have laid the foundations by a solid doctrine of scholastic theology; it is necessary to complete the work; to teach the method—of making mental prayer well, of protecting oneself from illusions —of advancing surely by the steps of contemplation when drawn to it; but it is not scholastic theology which teaches that."[3]

No doubt it is very rarely required to undertake the direction of a St Teresa or a Rose of Lima; but there are many inferior degrees of sanctity which still enter into the domain of mysticism. Nor is this all. In our day there are still to be found the higher degrees, ecstatics, stigmatics, seers, and even the possessed. For

[1] *Ascent of Carmel*, Pref.
[2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. v.
[3] *Spiritual Dialogues*, bk. v ch. vii.

the last half-century we have heard more and more of such wonders—Lourdes, La Salette, Pontmain, Tilly and the like. And in Europe we have still at least a dozen cases of stigmata or possession. "What time was ever more fertile in miracles?"

Mystical science, then, is more necessary than ever for the direction of souls and the guidance of public spirit and opinion. Extraordinary cases are found, not only in the cloister, but also in the world and in every profession, as is superabundantly shown by experience. If there were none but the blind to lead the blind the disaster of both would be inevitable: *ambo in foveam cadunt.*

Even though we do not aspire to become directors of souls, the utility of mystical science for *priests or layfolk* who read works of philosophy, theology, and religious criticism, would still be very great. They would complete our higher knowledge, widen the horizon of our mind and heart, permit us to form a reasonable opinion on certain marvellous facts which preoccupy the minds of our contemporaries, and enable us to take part usefully in those discussions in the drawing-room or in the press, in which so many people lightly engage without possessing the elementary knowledge and first principles which should guide them.

Even a considerable knowledge of natural and mental science, of philosophy and of theology, would still be very incomplete without the science of the saints. It would not enable one to open any of the wonderful works of St Teresa, of St John of the Cross, or of the other great masters of the spiritual life, without finding them speaking a language which was unintelligible, making such reading dry and a waste of time. The school of the great mystics would be wholly closed to us and we should have to confine ourselves to the narrow circle of spiritual reading and meditation intended for the ordinary faithful.

Furthermore, the works of St Francis de Sales, the most popular of all holy writers, would also be half closed to us. The expressions *contemplation*, *prayer of quiet*, *prayer of union*, and others from almost the whole range of mystical phraseology recur again and again in the works of the holy Doctor, particularly in his *Treatise on the Love of God*. So that without initiation these expressions do not convey a definite meaning, but are more or less vague and uncertain. In these circumstances what relish or benefit is to be found in reading the most beautiful pages of St Francis de Sales?

To remain, therefore, in ignorance of mystical theology is to

deprive ourselves of the purest and highest sources of true spirituality. It is to condemn ourselves to revolve in the narrow sphere of reading recommended to the most ordinary souls.

Is this our ideal? Is it above all the ideal of a priest? Or even of a great Christian?

Père de Caussade tells in his writings that once in his missionary work he met with a doctor in theology, who admitted to him that he had never been able to understand that chapter in which St Teresa describes the degrees of the prayer of quiet. Is not this fact, well authenticated, humiliating for the superiors and the teachers who were responsible for his theological training? Is mysticism, then, no longer, in their eyes, a branch of theology, and that the highest?

Mystical science, so necessary, as we have just seen, for the director of souls and for the priest himself in the completion of his studies and for his personal life, is no less so for the *apologist*, and for the defence of the Church against the unjustifiable attacks of the ignorant or of so-called scholars.

From this point of view it is more indispensable to-day than ever—both because of the dangerous wave which is carrying away so many minds, both in Europe and America, towards the false mysticism of the occult and spiritist sciences, which boast of having actual dealings with spirits; and also because of the disquieting revelations of contemporary science as to the resemblances claimed between marvels related in the lives of our mystic saints, ecstatic or thaumaturgic, and analogous effects reproduced at will in our hospitals for hysteria, such as the Salpêtrière, the Charité, Bordeaux, Nancy, and others, or again in the fashionable salons of our large towns, and at the gatherings of adepts in psychic and occult sciences, who make the marvellous their engrossing study in every quarter of the globe.

There is in this foolish infatuation of so many rash and curious minds, not only a danger of turning the heads of the less balanced, but moreover a real peril to Christian faith, lest, through ignorance or malice, the truly supernatural come to be confounded with the simply marvellous. To learn to distinguish them by means of the enlightening principles of mystical theology is therefore indispensable to the work of the Catholic apologist.[1]

[1] Mgr. Méric, *La Crise religieuse et le monde invisible*, in *Revue du Monde invisible*, first year, no. 1, pp. 1-13.

This does not mean that the reading of the great mystics and the study of so exalted and difficult a science should be *recommended to all* without distinction. Far be it from us to suggest so serious an exaggeration and one so full of peril. On this subject we frankly owe our readers an avowal.

There are two classes of persons especially who should be prudently dissuaded from it: these are the indiscreet and the fanciful.

First are the indiscreet and intemperate, who are attracted by everything extraordinary that they see, and at once, without discernment, desire it for themselves. They are too lacking in humility to acknowledge that there are ways set apart to which they have no claim, and to be modestly content with their own place. On the contrary, they aspire to mount ever higher in order to stand out beyond others. These souls, full of pride, when they read works of deep spirituality, run the risk of thus feeding their ambitious dreams, and of preparing for themselves the worst deceptions. This accounts very largely for the downfalls which resound throughout the centuries of false mystics and illuminati, who, in spite of the warnings of the Church, have clung obstinately to their errors and have been the victims of their own presumption and pride.

The second category is that of those of fantastic minds who, with indiscriminate trust in every, even the most foolish, creation of the imagination, evince rather naïveté than pride or self-love. Should they, for example, read a medical book, they immediately imagine that they themselves have all the morbid symptoms described by the writer. In the same way in reading the works of mystic saints they soon begin to think themselves the subjects of similar extraordinary phenomena.

Souls of such innate simplicity have been well described by St Francis de Sales in the following anecdote: " I recollect," he says, " speaking with two nuns belonging to two thoroughly reformed Orders, one of whom, through reading the works of the blessed Teresa, had learnt to speak so much like her that you might have thought her a little Mother Teresa herself; and she believed it, picturing in herself all that St Teresa had done during life, to such an extent that she thought she had the same experiences, even to the binding of the soul and the suspension of the powers of which she had read in the saint's writings and of which she spoke quite familiarly. Others there are who, from constantly reading the lives of St Catherine of

Siena or her namesake of Genoa, end in thinking that they are Saint Catherines themselves by imitation."[1]

But besides these souls, either far too ingenuous or too presumptuous, happily we find a great number of others, sincerely humble and gifted with well-balanced minds, who, without being in any way called by God to these extraordinary ways, may derive much benefit from this reading and study.

In the same way that we can read the lives of the holy martyrs or anchorites with benefit, without ourselves being destined to martyrdom or to a life in the desert, so in like manner the reading of these mystical saints whom the Church proposes for veneration, far from being useless to the simple faithful whose minds are sufficiently cultivated to profit by it, may well be to their very great advantage. Is it ever a loss of time for us to have intercourse with higher minds, with generous hearts, with heroes and saints? Most certainly not.

Without always flattering ourselves that we are able to attain to such heights, their words and example will inspire us with nobler and more generous sentiments which little by little will raise the level of our piety and spiritual life. They will open for us new horizons, transport us to a higher atmosphere where the air is purer and the heavens nearer. They will act as an antidote to the poisonous miasmas of this lower world, be a relief from the scandals and sordidness here below, and a comfort in our most bitter trials. They will bring to us a glimpse of the radiant light, the beauty and joy of our heavenly fatherland. By reviving Christian faith and hope in our souls, they will be our greatest strength in the midst of the temptations and struggles of this life.

Surely, then, we must put no small value on such a study of the science of the saints. It will be no waste of our time.

This science, although very vast, may be subjected to a simple division by grouping it round two principal facts: (1) the *essential* phenomenon of the mystical life or *infused contemplation*, of which we shall explain the nature, the steps, and the trials in a preliminary *didactic section*, and afterwards uphold, in a second *apologetic section*, against the various attacks and controversies of our opponents; (2) the *accidental* and marvellous phenomena of mystical states, whether of the cognitive, affective, or physical order. Thus,

[1] *Spiritual Conferences*, no. 9.

for example, visions, clairvoyance, prophecies, infused knowledge, are among the intellectual marvels; ecstasy, stigmatization, and mystical sufferings, among the marvels of sense; transfiguration of the body, its radiance and mystical perfume, its levitation, etc., among those that are physical.

On our way we shall come across and distinguish with great care the natural analogies of certain morbid states, and also the diabolical imitations.

The *sources* of the whole of mystical theology from which we propose to draw may be arranged in two groups. First of all for the *facts observed*—for mysticism is above everything based on the observation of facts, without which the idea of an explanatory theory would never have been formed—we shall look to history, either in the Old and New Testaments, or the lives of the Saints, such as the sincere and profound autobiographies of St Teresa, or the accounts authorized by the Bollandists, whose critical work is beyond compare, or, finally, the memoirs and discussions of learned societies of our own time.

Then for the *theory*, our principles will be borrowed either from natural reason, brought to its highest point in the philosophy of Aristotle and St Thomas, or by enlightenment revealed in Holy Writ and interpreted by the tradition of the Church, whose living magisterium completes, explains, or confirms the text of our sacred books.

We understand, moreover, by this word *tradition*, (*a*) the Ecumenical Councils; (*b*) the decisions of the Holy See, its condemnations of divers errors, as for example those of Quietism, of Jansenism, or of Modernism; (*c*) the Fathers of the Church as witnessing to tradition; (*d*) the sacred Liturgy, the rites of which give expression to traditional faith, according to the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi ;* (*e*) and finally, although of less authority, the numerous writings of the masters of the spiritual life throughout the ages until our own time, who have striven to be the faithful echoes of this living tradition.

A bibliography of the best known of these writers will be found at the end of this work, and we shall refer, when we deem it necessary, by the use of a number of quotations and references, to original texts.

But before beginning our study, let us cast a glimpse back over the history of mystical facts in past centuries.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

THE FACT OF MYSTICISM THROUGHOUT THE AGES—IT IS THE GREAT SOURCE OF THE LIFE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

THE introduction to any science should include a brief glance at its history, as Aristotle, St Thomas, and other great masters have formally taught as well as practised. But this glance into the past appears to us to be specially useful in the case of mystical science, which is an experimental science, based on observed facts.

Before looking into the nature of the mystical union of certain souls with God, before proceeding to an examination or definition either of the essential elements which constitute this union or of the secondary and accessory elements which complete and embellish it, it is good for us to ask ourselves a preliminary question concerning the *reality of mystical facts.*

In the first place, does this alleged divine union, with all its marvellous effects, exist, or at least has it existed during the course of the Christian centuries? For if this union never existed, if it be but an idle fancy of the imagination, our study will be likewise chimerical, and our efforts to seek and follow this phantom will be quite useless and vain.

Now it is the history of Christianity which is alone able to answer this important question; and Christian history must be for us the witness as to whether this marvellous thing is real or non-existent.

To run through the whole history of the Old and New Testaments here would be a task alike inexhaustible and superfluous. To be convinced of the reality of the fact of mysticism and of its paramount importance in the life of the Church—and even in the life of the world—it is enough for us to make a rapid survey of the history of the Church, in its broad lines and chief landmarks, from the time of our Lord until our own day. It will suffice to show, by means of a general and synthetic view of these nineteen centuries of Christianity, that mystical and marvellous facts have never ceased to be produced, and that the faith of the Church on this all-important point has been constant and universal.

This valuable conclusion makes a most encouraging opening for our inquiry.

And to begin with, the *first union* of man with God, the highest, the most illuminating and most wonderful of all, is that of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, the *God-man*. It has shone over the whole earth, so that it has transformed the old world into a new one, and it will remain, until the end of time, the ideal type proposed to all the mystic saints, for very far-off and imperfect imitation.

His coming on earth had been prepared, foretold, and prefigured by all the seers of the Old Testament: the holy patriarchs, the prophets and prophetesses, the thaumaturges of the ancient law, up to St John the Forerunner, Zachary, the Blessed Virgin, and St Joseph. All those seers, with whose marvels our holy books are filled, have left us a glimpse of the secret of their higher life in their mystic dealings with God; but none has ever claimed to reach the height of this union, nor dared to say with Jesus Christ: "I and the Father are one": *Ego et Pater unum sumus*;[1] none has appeared transfigured before men, as he was on Mount Thabor during his lofty prayer: *Facta est dum oraret facies ejus altera*;[2] none has astounded men by such great miracles, which were made by him the distinctive sign of his divine mission: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them."[3]

But, far from keeping it to himself alone, the God-man came to spread this divine life in the world: *Veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant*,[4] and the means by which he teaches us to live this new life more abundantly is always the same: union with God, but a union made possible through him. The God-man, then, is the bond of union between man and God. This fundamental truth is taught unceasingly by him in every form: "That they may be one as we also are one": *Ut sint unum sicut ego et tu unum sumus*.[5] This sublime truth he also made popular and intelligible by the touching parable of the vine: "I am the vine and you the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall

[1] *Joan.* x 30. [2] *Luc.* ix 29. [3] *Matth.* xi 5.
[4] *Joan.* x 10. [5] *Joan.* xvii 22.

wither. . . . If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you."[1]

And note that, according to the promise of our Lord, the fruit of this mystic union is not only interior and invisible holiness, but it is also exterior and visible to the eyes of all: " He that believeth in me, the works that I do he shall do also, and greater than these shall he do, because I go to the Father ": *Opera quae ego facio et ipse faciet, et majora eorum faciet.*[2]

" This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel," adds St Luke: " I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams . . . I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath."[3]

After the Ascension and Pentecost, the *Apostles* were eager to re-echo these lofty truths throughout the world, and to set the example of their practice.

Amongst them may be cited *St John*, the beloved apostle, the seer of Patmos, the eagle whose gaze was fixed in the light of God on the eternal generation of the Word. He has unfolded for us the secret of that clear vision which he enjoyed in his intimate union with God in these words: " We abide in him and he in us."[4]

But it is above all the apostle *St Paul*, whom Clement of Alexandria so well calls *the Mystic* (ὁ μύστης), who repeats in its fulness this same teaching, after having put it into practice himself: " Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ "[5]—" And I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me "[6]—" But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit "[7]—" Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you ?"[8]—" For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God "[9]—" Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation ? or distress ? or famine ? or nakedness ? or danger ? or persecution ? or the sword ? . . . But in all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,

[1] *Joan.* xv 5-7. [2] *Joan.* xiv 12. [3] *Act.* ii 17-19.
[4] 1 *Joan.* iv 13. [5] 1 *Cor.* iv 16. [6] *Gal.* ii 20.
[7] 1 *Cor.* vi 17. [8] 1 *Cor.* vi 19. [9] *Col.* iii 3.

shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[1]

After this noble profession of faith and love, it comes as no surprise for us to find that the Apostle, so closely united to God through Christ, had his share, and a great share, in the light and secrets of God: "I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not, God knoweth), such an one rapt even to the third heaven. And I know such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I know not, God knoweth: that he was caught up into Paradise; and heard secret words, which it is not granted unto man to utter."[2]

Nevertheless, those thus privileged with mystical gifts are not rare, for it is again the same Apostle who declares that they are around him: "Now there are diversities of graces but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries but the same Lord. . . . But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one, indeed, by the Spirit is given the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith in the same Spirit; to another the grace of healing in one Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another interpretation of speeches. But in all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will."[3]

Our Lord has promised this wonderful divine aid to his Church "until the consummation of the world," and it is easy to see that he has never ceased to fulfil this promise throughout all ages.

Mystical gifts shone brightly in the *early Christian centuries* which followed the apostolic age, especially among the martyrs and the anchorites of the desert.

The innumerable *martyrs* during three centuries of ceaseless persecution watered with their blood and rendered fruitful the sterile soil from which the newly born Church of Christ sprang, and they doubtless had a claim to a very special and wonderful assistance from God: nor did this fail them. On the contrary, it was bestowed on them abundantly and without measure. In proof, we need but open the Acts of the Martyrs authentically drawn up by witnesses, confirmed by con-

[1] *Rom.* viii 35-39. [2] 2 *Cor.* xii 2-4. [3] 1 *Cor.* xii 4-11.

temporaries, and authorized by the Church, which recommends them to be publicly read in solemn assemblies of the faithful.

The first of them all, St Stephen the deacon, in the midst of his torture of stoning, saw the heavens opened, and Jesus enthroned in glory consoling and fortifying him in a sublime vision. After his example, most of the Christians on their way to martyrdom were lifted up to the highest degrees of the mystical life. Their visions and ecstasies were frequent, and with them all those marvels which are their outward expression. The most remarkable were the gift of prophecy and that of being insusceptible to pain.

They often predicted their own death and the circumstances of their torment or that of their companions. Such, for instance, were the prophetic visions of St Perpetua in her prison. Several days before her death, she was warned that she and her brother, St Saturus, would be exposed to wild beasts. The event confirmed these visions: Saturus was ground by the teeth of a leopard, Perpetua was gored by the horns of a savage cow, and both were finally slain by the sword of the gladiators. Similar visions were vouchsafed to St Cyprian, St Pionius, St Marianus, St James, and many others of whom there is an endless list.

St Lawrence, when stretched on his gridiron, in an ecstasy which illumined his face, foretold to his brethren the future of Christianity in Rome, and the reign of a Christian Emperor, who would bring to a close the era of persecutions and give peace to the Church. This prediction, made a century in advance, of the famous victory of Constantine and the edict of Milan, cannot be explained naturally.

The insusceptibility of martyrs in the midst of fearful tortures is another most wonderful mystical occurrence. Yet it was frequent, as the following words taken from the letter from the Church of Smyrna on the martyrdom of St Polycarp bear witness. " For a great number of martyrs whips, torture, and flames seemed sweet and agreeable. They allowed not a single sigh to escape whilst the blood flowed from all their members, whilst their very bowels were exposed through the gaping wounds in their torn bodies and the onlookers themselves were unable to refrain from tears at such a sight. It is the Lord who watches over their souls and protects them, speaks with them, softens their pains and places before their eyes the heavenly crown which is to reward their patience."

It is this wonderful gift of impassibility which is proclaimed by St Cyprian when he says to the martyr Flavian: "The body feels no pain when the soul gives itself wholly to God." Such, in fact, is the ordinary consequence of the ecstatic state: after the first suffering, which very soon passes, the soul is suddenly lifted to the mystical raptures of ecstasy in which the sting of pain is extinguished amidst ineffable spiritual consolations.

The body may then be clothed in a marvellous brightness and give out a heavenly perfume. Wild beasts themselves feel the influence of its charm; they were seen to stop short at the feet of the martyrs, like St Blandina, not daring to attack them, or submissively licking their hands. Even the flames of the pyre have been seen to bend back and arch themselves beneath the bodies of the martyrs, as in the case of St Polycarp, rather than do them harm.

These are the marvels of the physical order which at times accompany the ecstatic states, and are no less wonderful than the other marvels of the intellectual or moral order. These we shall study with the greatest care in the second part of this work.

Whilst the fact of mysticism shone with startling brightness among the martyrs, other Christians, the *anchorites*—who had fled from the tumult of the pagan world of which Christ said, *Vae mundo a scandalis*—found it again and made it shine more brightly than ever in the silence and solitude of the desert. Retreat and silence, indeed, are requisite for the development of the mystical life, in order that the powers of the soul may hearken to the inward voice of the divine Spirit, without being distracted or troubled by outward things. The deserts of the East, in Palestine and Syria and Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Euphrates, and above all in the valley of the Nile, were the first to draw the earlier Christian anchorites. Some, like St Antony and St Pachomius, founded monasteries there, where monks lived together, subject to a severe rule, and were sanctified by poverty, obedience, work, and prayer. Others, like St Paul, feeling greater attraction towards the solitary life, lived alone in caves or humble shelters, after the example of the prophet Elias, or the Forerunner St John the Baptist. The cloister, however, was commonly the noviciate for the eremitical life, and the latter was only permitted after a preliminary training in interior life and contemplation—in other words, in Christian mysticism.

But these holy anchorites soon became the wonder of the

pagan world, not only because they were living a life altogether new, in which they renounced the world and the seductions of the flesh, riches and ambition, for poverty, chastity, obedience, and work; but also because this new life of union with God transfigured them to a state higher than was naturally human by means of mystical gifts; so that their influence and their prestige prepared the way for the establishment of Christianity in those countries.

Among these gifts shone that of ecstatic rapture. St Macarius of Egypt was nearly always in ecstasy and communed thus with God almost the whole day. St Arsenius remained so during whole nights. At sunset every Saturday night, with hands upraised to heaven, he entered into contemplation until the rising sun enlightened his countenance; then only did the ecstasy cease and he would go and take a little rest.

Ecstasy among the anchorites was often accompanied by visions, through which they were instructed in the truths of salvation, or else informed as to the most hidden events of the present, past, or future. For example, when St Antony wished to know something of which he was ignorant, he had but to pray to God, who, by symbolical and often prophetic visions, immediately gave him the knowledge—whence the gifts of prophecy, long-distance vision, and discernment of spirits, of which we read so often in the life of this saint. Although less commonly known than the temptations of St Antony and his struggles with the devil, these facts of clairvoyance and supernatural knowledge would have been enough to make his name famous.

To these mystical gifts the Fathers of the desert often joined a wonderful dominion over all the forces of nature. Serpents and the most savage and ferocious animals became docile to their voices, and far from harming them would often render them services—as is related of St Didymus, St Hilarion, St Pachomius, and many others; the storms and elements when commanded were appeased at their word; sickness and infirmity were healed without remedy, and devils driven from the bodies of those possessed. Although some parts of the wonders related in the lives of the Fathers of the desert may be legendary, the foundation of a great part of these accounts is certainly authentic: it is confirmed by so great a mass of evidence that it cannot be doubted.

The transition from these holy solitaries to the great *monastic orders* is easily effected through St Benedict (480–543), who

himself passed from the desert of Subiaco to the foundation at Monte Cassino of the monastery that has since developed into so famous an order. There in the cloister were sketched the first outlines of mystical knowledge, and the illustrious Dionysius, the pseudo-Areopagite, the true founder of this science, was a Palestinian monk of the fifth century.

In the midst of the populous cities of the world, however, neither the science itself nor mystical experiences were lacking. It is enough, in order to show this, to cite the great names of St Augustine in the fifth century, St Gregory the Great in the sixth, and St Peter Damian in the eleventh, the works of whom are looked upon as authoritative by mystical theologians.

In order to show that the fact of mysticism existed in the twelfth century, together with the marvels which sprang from it, we have only to turn to the lives of St Bruno, the Father of the Carthusian Order, or St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, or of St Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, or again to one less known but no less wonderful, that of Blessed Juliana, Prioress of the Leper Hospital of Mont-Cornillon, near Liège, nun of the Order of St Augustine, who was an ecstatic of the Blessed Sacrament, and the promoter of the Feast of Corpus Christi, which was inaugurated in 1264 by Pope Urban IV. The points of resemblance between her and St Margaret Mary Alacoque are exceedingly striking.

In the *thirteenth century*, side by side with such popular ecstatics as the stigmatized St Francis of Assisi and St Dominic, we find contemplation united with most profound study in St Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, St Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, and in Blessed Albert the Great, whose learning was universal. We find also St Antony of Padua, of the Order of St Francis, who was at the same time scholar, theologian, and orator, but above all a man of mystical prayer. He received the divine Infant Jesus in his arms; he had the gift of tongues, of clairvoyance, of bilocation, and of dominion over beasts and all nature.

St Elizabeth of Hungary, Franciscan Tertiary, after her husband's death, took our Lord for her only spouse and was lifted to the highest degrees of mystical contemplation. "In this young widow," wrote Montalembert, "is portrayed all the Catholic romance of suffering and love at the most brilliant period of the Middle Ages." We know, among other things, how her love for the poor was rewarded by the

miracle of the roses, repeated almost in our own day by St Germaine of Pibrac.

We would mention also St Clare of Montefalco in Italy, who was a contemplative from her tenderest childhood. She went into ecstasy before the Blessed Sacrament. A great lover of the mysteries of the sacred Passion of the Saviour, she received from him the stigmata. She had in her heart a sensation as of a cross, and when the autopsy was made at her death, an excrescence was in fact discovered on her heart in the shape of a cross.

In the *fourteenth century* we find among the mystical saints St Bridget of Sweden, princess and widow, who founded the Order of St Saviour (Rule of St Augustine). All her life, especially the last thirty years, was one long series of marvels. The enormous volume, in which she gave an account of her visions and revelations, was examined by the Council of Bâle, which refused to censure it in spite of much zealous opposition and denunciation. She died in Rome in 1373, on her way back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

St Catherine of Siena, of the Order of St Dominic, is depicted by the Italian painters as the bride of Christ. She lived without food other than the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord offered her the choice between two crowns; she chose the crown of thorns, and experienced therefrom the most bitter pains. She received the stigmata of the five wounds and a wound in the heart, but it was granted her that the former should not be visible. Rapt in ecstasy, she dictated a whole dialogue between the eternal Father and herself his servant. Her works of deep spirituality are rich in beauty and good taste. St Gertrude, Abbess of a Benedictine monastery in Saxony, has left us learned treatises on mysticism which contain her visions and revelations on the mysteries of our Lord. Blessed Angela of Foligno, widow, of the third Order of St Francis, shows us the wonderful fruit of contemplation in her writings on the attributes of God, the mysteries of our Lord, the Eucharist, and so forth.

The chief representatives of the mystical schools of Germany and Brabant may also be noted: such as John Ruysbroeck, Eckhart, Tauler, Blessed Henry Suso, Dionysius the Carthusian, Thomas à Kempis, and others, whose influence and renown were so great in this and the following centuries.

In the *fifteenth century* we have Joan of Arc, the heroine and holy shepherdess of Domrémy, whose visions at Bois-Chesnu

and whose predictions as to Parliament and the departure of the English from France are well known. Blessed Joan of Maillé, of Tours, widow and Franciscan Tertiary, was celebrated for the supernatural light she received on the Eucharist and the Passion. Dionysius the Carthusian, of Liège, was surnamed the ecstatic Doctor, because his life was passed continually in raptures and apparitions, concerning which he wrote the one hundred and fifty volumes of his works, preserved in the Carthusian monastery at Ruremonde. Blessed Jane of Valois, a daughter of Louis XI, who founded the Order of the Annunciation at Bourges, was an ecstatic of the Blessed Sacrament. She had the gift of healing wounds and ulcers by kissing them. St Lydwine of Schiedam, in Holland, was an ecstatic of the Passion and was familiar with her guardian angel. The history of this marvellous victim has been written by Huysmans. St Catherine of Genoa, widow, grand-niece of Innocent IV, whose *Treatise on Purgatory* and incomparable *Dialogues* are famous.

In the *sixteenth century* we have St Francis of Paula, who founded the Minims in Calabria. A contemplative from infancy, he was once surprised by King Ferdinand of Naples, who found him in ecstasy, resplendent with light, and raised several feet above the floor of his cell. His gift of curing the sick was famous throughout Europe. Anne of Brittany and Louis XI had recourse to him. His predictions to Pope Julius II created a great sensation.

St Ignatius Loyola and St Francis Xavier were at the same time men of action and great contemplatives, or rather their apostolic zeal was but the outward expression of their mystical life. It is known of the Apostle of India that in the midst of his labours and of his greatest sufferings he experienced such frequent raptures and ecstasies that at length he cried out, "Enough, Lord, enough! Spare this poor heart. I can bear no more." When in ecstasy he was raised several arm's lengths in the air and was thus suspended for quite a long time. It was proved at his canonization that he possessed most marvellous gifts.

St Philip Neri, founder of the Oratorians, enjoyed almost continual prayer. When he said Mass, he often became enraptured and raised above the ground, surrounded with light. When he was ill the holy Eucharist was both his food and medicine. After his death the doctors, noticing the deformity of his heart, through the main artery of which the blood had ceased to flow, declared that his life had been pro-

longed only by a miracle. His body remained incorrupt for seven years.

St Teresa of Jesus, the great reformer of the Carmelites, after a somewhat worldly youth, was rapidly raised to the highest degrees of contemplation, and was privileged to die during a prolonged ecstasy. Her confessors, for a long time, considered her supernatural states as illusions, and treated her with extreme harshness. But she had the good fortune to meet with enlightened directors, such as Fr. Balthazar Alvarez, Fr. Luis of Granada, Blessed John of Avila, St Louis Bertrand, St Peter of Alcantara, and St Francis Borgia, who reassured her and assisted her in her ascension towards God. The story is well known of the seraph who pierced her heart with a fiery dart and how this vision was confirmed at the autopsy. Her body was exhumed several times: nine months after her death (July 4, 1583), twelve years after (1604), twenty-four years after (1616), and almost two hundred years after, in 1750, and it was certified that it had remained incorrupt and flexible, that it exhaled a sweet odour, and that her heart still bore the wound of the angel, a deep horizontal wound almost dividing the heart in two, as is still to be seen through the crystal reliquary in the monastery of Alba, where she died. The Bollandists have reproduced it in a very exact drawing.

St Teresa added to her experience of the extraordinary ways of mysticism a real and deep knowledge of these ways. Furthermore, Gregory XV called her, at her canonization, Doctor of the Church. Her writings, in four large folio volumes, are still looked upon, together with those of Dionysius the Areopagite, as the most complete and reliable monument of mystical theology. Most of them were written during her ecstasies, and without the least erasure, as the originals preserved in the library of the Escorial bear witness. Among the best known may be mentioned her *Life* or autobiography; the *Interior Castle ;* the *Way of Perfection;* and *Thoughts on the Love of God.* Her *Statutes* and her *Letters* are those of a master mind and a perfect organizer. Her *Poems* rank with the classical Spanish poetry of the sixteenth century, of which she remains one of the greatest figures.

Side by side with St Teresa may be placed St John of the Cross, who was her disciple and collaborator. Under her inspiration he was the founder of the Discalced Carmelites. His love of the Cross and his sufferings seemed wonderful.

Pati et contemni pro te was his reply to our Lord, when he asked him to choose a reward. He has left much-esteemed mystical writings, of which the best known are, first of all, the *Spiritual Canticle*, a heavenly epithalamium, the inspired lines of which were written in the prison of Toledo; then the *Ascent of Carmel* and the *Dark Night*, which together form one single treatise; finally, the *Living Flame of Love*, overflowing with poetic inspiration. He was both an eminent mystic and a learned theologian.

With St John of the Cross, St Teresa, and St Ignatius, Spain of the sixteenth century gave to the world quite a group of mystical saints, such as Blessed John of Avila, Luis of Granada, Luis de Leon, Jerome Gratian of the Mother of God, and others.

At the same period also we meet with St Aloysius Gonzaga and St Stanislaus Kostka, who died in the flower of their age, yet in whom the highest perfection was reached. It is enough to call to mind these two names to show that the highest and purest mystical sanctity belongs to all ages, and may be found in the soul in childhood and in youth. St Germaine Cousin, the humble shepherdess of Pibrac, is another example of this. Ever united with God, she fell asleep during prayer and ecstasy at the age of twenty-two.

The *seventeenth century* also was the " great century " for holiness. Some instances are here given.

St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi was called Catherine because she had been consecrated to St Catherine of Siena, whose virtues she was to reproduce. She entered the Carmelite Order the same year that St Teresa died (1582). After her profession, she went into ecstasy every day, and composed writings which seem to be inspired. Amongst them are found admirable rules for leading the religious life. Among her revelations there was one which struck Cardinal Alexander dei Medici with astonishment, of whom she predicted not only his elevation to the Papacy as Leo XI but also his short reign. As a matter of fact, he only survived his election by twenty-eight days.

Then there is Blessed Mary of the Incarnation, better known in France as Mme. Acarie. After the death of her husband, she entered Carmel, and edified the monasteries of Amiens and Pontoise by her humility, love of suffering, and by her mystical gifts.

Certain features in the life of St Francis de Sales belong to mysticism—such, for instance, as his ecstasy in the chapel of

Loretto, the temptation to despair from which he was delivered before the Black Virgin of St Thomas of Villanova, his vision of the future foundress of the Order of the Visitation, his gift of tears, his marvellous power of converting heretics, whom he exorcized before evangelizing them, his astonishing visions of the future, and the prediction of his own death.

St Jane Frances de Chantal, spiritual daughter of St Francis de Sales, became a widow at the age of twenty-eight. She took a vow of consecration to God, who showed her in a vision him who was to be her director. The meeting of the two saints at Dijon is well known, when they recognized one another and each became conscious of the intentions of the other, although they had before never met or corresponded. She founded the Order of the Visitation at Annecy and took there the vow of the "more perfect." She led a wonderful life, which during its last years was directed by St Vincent de Paul.

St Vincent de Paul, the Father of the poor, the founder of the Congregation of the Mission, was above all a man of deeds. Nevertheless, in many ways he may be said to belong to the contemplatives and mystics, for there shone in him many marvellous gifts: extraordinary light in the reading of consciences, in discovering vocations, in discerning spirits, and in foretelling the future. The same may be said of Mme. Le Gras, foundress of the Daughters of Charity, to whom St Vincent acted as director.

More numerous still are the mystical facts connected with Cardinal de Bérulle, founder of the French Oratory. A contemplative from childhood, he frequently became rapt during the Holy Mass, and in accordance with his desire he died at the altar. Père de Condren, second superior of the Oratory, inherited his spirit and his gifts. With them may be associated another spiritual son of St Vincent de Paul, M. Olier. Predestined from childhood, he was blessed by St Francis de Sales, who foretold his vocation, and trained by St Vincent de Paul, who considered him a saint. Miraculously enlightened through the Venerable Mère Agnes de Langeac, he gave new life to the clergy of France by founding the seminary of St Sulpice. An eminent contemplative, he read the secrets of hearts, worked wonderful cures, and above all received light from God concerning the Priesthood of our Lord and sacerdotal virtue.

The Venerable Mère Agnes de Jésus, Dominican of the monastery of Langeac, had so wonderful a life, that it was only

published after long hesitation. Her ecstasies which lasted several days, the sensible presence of her guardian angel with which she was favoured, her appearing to several persons, notably M. Olier, are none the less well-authenticated facts.

St Rose of Lima in Peru, Dominican, after a life of frightful macerations, in which our Lord consoled her and took her as his bride, endowing her with marvellous gifts, died at the age of thirty-one in the midst of sufferings and raptures.

The Venerable Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament, of the monastery of Beaune, in Burgundy. She was an ecstatic of the Blessed Sacrament from childhood. Our Lord communicated her, explained to her the mysteries of his Passion, and united her thereto. She remained as though dead from Good Friday until Easter Day.

St Margaret Mary Alacoque, of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial, well known owing to those wonderful visions of the Sacred Heart which have rendered her so popular.

St Peter Claver, Jesuit of Catalonia, Apostle of the Negroes, whose apostolate was one long miracle, renewed the wonders of St Francis Xavier. St John Francis Regis, Apostle of Velay and Vivarais, and the Venerable Claud Bernard, surnamed the " poor priest," who was so popular at Dijon on account of his poverty, contemplation, and ecstasies, which prevented him from saying Mass in public, were both mystics. The Venerable Mère Catherine, or Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Order of St Benedict, who founded a religious community for the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and was so celebrated in Lorraine, was again an ecstatic.

The *eighteenth century*, so sensual and impious, opens with a living illustration of the folly of the Cross. Blessed Louis Grignon de Montfort, Breton, pupil of the Jesuits at Rennes and of Saint-Sulpice at Paris, founder of the Daughters of Wisdom, appeared in the west of France as an inspired prophet, possessing supernatural enlightenment, with the gift of converting the most hardened. St John Baptist de la Salle, another pupil of Saint-Sulpice, founder of the Christian Brothers, was a man of tremendous energy and at the same time a contemplative and a mystic. His ecstasies during Mass and his extraordinary lights caused him to be looked upon as a popular oracle.

St Alphonsus Liguori combined the learning of the doctors with the zeal of an apostle, the austerities of a Trappist, and the gifts of the mystical saints. The Blessed Virgin cured him miraculously and appeared to him while he was preaching in the

churches of Foggio and Arianzo, so that all the people cried out, " A miracle ! A miracle !" It was in another vision that he was ordered to found the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. At his canonization many other facts of ecstasy, bilocation, clairvoyance, and miraculous healing were duly established.

St Benedict Joseph Labré is celebrated through his pilgrimages to the sanctuaries of Alsace, Lorraine, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Rome. Everywhere he left behind him the memory of his virtues, his prophecies, and his miracles.

This century ended with the blood of the martyrs of the French Revolution, the Carmelites of Compiègne, the victims of the massacre of Carmelites on September 2, 1792, and many other heroic victims in the provinces, whose beatification is beginning to reveal to us their supernatural gifts.

In the *nineteenth century* martyrs also abound, but mystical saints are not wanting. At Luçon the Venerable Père Baudoin, founder of the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and of the Ursulines of Chavagnes, who had been imprisoned for the Faith in 1793, was a seer of visions and a contemplative. The Venerable Père Libermann, of Alsace, founder of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was a Jew miraculously converted, whose life was full of visions and revelations: he died after a long ecstasy. Père Muard, of the diocese of Sens, founder of the Fathers of St Edmund, diocesan missionaries of Pontigny, and of the Benedictines of the Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate at Pierre-qui-Vire, was also a contemplative and visionary.

But it is beyond all the Curé d'Ars, St John Baptist Vianney, who gained a universal reputation for holiness on account of his wonderful gifts of clairvoyance, vision at a distance, penetration of hearts, and above all, for the conversion of sinners and the direction of souls, which have rendered him so popular.

We will conclude, then, with this last, an enumeration, far from complete, of the mystical saints, merely mentioning, by way of reminder, the mystical facts of La Salette, Lourdes, Pontmain, and, whatever their nature, those of Loigny and of Tilly, without speaking of the numerous stigmatics in the Tyrol, Belgium, and France. Was there ever, we repeat, a time more fertile in wonders ? What epoch demanded more from us the discernment of spirits ?

Three conclusions may be deduced from this rapid bird's-eye view across more than nineteen unbroken centuries of mystical sanctity.

1. The first is that mysticism is certainly an historical fact, at least for all those who do not wilfully close their eyes, and who do not deny *a priori* the possibility of the supernatural. For, indeed, what man of good faith could accuse such masters of critical history as the Bollandists of ignorance or imposture, when they inspire our confidence in the value of such accounts by their monumental researches? Who would dare to speak lightly of the processes of canonization, at which these same facts have been set forth at length, before such honest and competent judges, and then severely scrutinized and discussed? Few, indeed, of the facts of profane history have been submitted to a like control or so well authenticated.

The *a priori* denials of free-thinkers avail nothing here. No doubt they have not had the same experiences as St Paul or St Teresa. In that, therefore, they are comparable to the blind who have never experienced light or colour; yet by what right could they deny the existence of light or colour? There is nothing scientific in such a denial. In a science which is based on observation, such for instance as astronomy, it is necessary to become acquainted with the numerous and concordant testimonies of those who have themselves experienced certain facts which are inaccessible to us. It would be unreasonable to reject on foregone conclusions such a consensus of witnesses. And all the more when such witnesses substantiate the authentic account of their experiences by means of a multitude of divine signs and supernatural marvels, which have never taken place in the case of the profane sciences, but remain proper to the science of mysticism. The mystical saints alone have supported their testimony by marvellous and transcendent acts. We must needs therefore give credit to their word.

2. The second conclusion is no less important. Not only is the fact of mysticism, throughout the ages, one that is incontestable, but it appears as one of the greatest *sources of the life of the Church*. It sustained her at her birth in the heroic struggles of her martyrs, throughout the bloody persecutions of the first three centuries; then during the invasions of the barbarians, whom she succeeded in converting; later on during the no less dangerous invasions of heresies, and the constant assaults of pagan naturalism, always subdued and overcome by the radiancy of Christian and mystical supernaturalism.

It is consequently an essential element in the life of the Church, and therefore perpetual and indefectible like the Church herself. It is a visible and tangible proof of her sanctity, of her fruitfulness—in a word, of her union with God and the assistance that he has promised her until the end of the world.

3. Finally, because the fact of mysticism is a manifest and perpetual fact, essential and of paramount importance to the life of the Church, a duty is imposed upon us, and upon all scholars who have the Faith, to devote ourselves to acquiring a better knowledge of it: the *duty of studying it* with all that respect and care which it merits. If the wonders of the visible heavens proclaim and sing the glory of the Creator, as the Psalmist has well said, what shall we say of the hidden marvels of souls raised to the highest state of holiness? Therein, above all, is God truly wonderful: *mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis!*

It is in this spirit that we invite all our readers to follow us in a study, at times arduous and laborious, but most often comforting and illuminating, in spite of the obscurities from which the knowledge of the Infinite Being can never be wholly exempt for us, in our feebleness, in this mortal life.

Division.—We shall begin, as we have said, by studying the *essential phenomenon* of the mystical life; that which all theologians call *contemplation*, or infused and passive prayer of contemplation. We shall analyse its *nature*, its *kinds*, and the conditions which *prepare* the way for it—reserving for the second part the *accessory and marvellous phenomena* which often accompany mystical contemplation. The first part will be composed of two sections, the one *didactic* for the exposition of the doctrine, the other *apologetic* for its defence against all contemporary attacks and controversies. The inconvenience of a few repetitions entailed by this procedure will be amply compensated by a greater abundance of light, care for which must be the first consideration in so complex and difficult a study, where confusion is rife.

PART I

FIRST SECTION: DIDACTIC

THE ESSENTIAL PHENOMENON OF THE MYSTICAL LIFE

Infused Prayer of Contemplation

BEFORE giving a description of the wonderful yet accessory and *accidental* phenomena of the mystical life, it is indispensable that we should first know the *essential* and fundamental phenomenon, without which the others could not exist, and must therefore be looked upon as false and illusive, however marvellous they may seem.

It is a delicate task to *distinguish the essential* from the accidental, and to state precisely the exact line which divides them, a task which, however, is rendered easier by almost unanimous agreement on the subject among all theologians.

This essential element of mystical sanctity, as we shall see, cannot be imitated. Furthermore, it is the touchstone of all those marvellous effects occasionally more or less imitable by the contrivance of man or of the devil. Thus, for example, the gifts of clairvoyance, of second sight, of telepathy, of levitation, or of stigmatization, when they are not grafted on to this stem of interior life and holiness, are, to say the least, very suspect.

Now this essential phenomenon of all mystical life is a most complex phenomenon which is known to theologians by the one word *contemplation*, or the infused prayer of contemplation. Its more adequate and complete formula should be this: *the intimate union of the soul with God through infused prayer of contemplation.* The several ideas contained in these words must be carefully explained.

The union of the soul with God, ending in the happiness of heaven, which is more or less vaguely anticipated on earth, is not exclusively proper to the mystical life, but is common to all perfect life.[1]

[1] This is the repeated teaching of St Teresa. In the case of every Christian "With the help of divine grace *true union* can always be

The earnest effort of the soul to approach God, to become united to him, not indeed physically, but by a moral union of association; to bring about, as it were, a fusion of our mind, heart, and will with the thought, affections, and good pleasure of God—in a word, to produce within ourselves an ever-flowing stream of the divine life in our soul by faith, hope, and charity —this is the essential task of all Christian perfection.

Union with God, then, in our definition, is only the *genus*. The *specific difference* of mystical union consists in the means or instrument of union offered by God in his merciful goodness, called in the definition *infused prayer of contemplation*. It is on this particular point, then, that our explanation must be brought to bear. For greater clearness we shall first state what this mystical prayer *is not;* and then proceed to state what it *is*.

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attained by forcing ourselves to renounce our own will and by following the will of God in all things. . . . Is it necessary, in order to attain to this kind of divine union, for the *powers of the soul to be suspended* [as in mystical union] ? No; God has many ways of enriching the soul . . . besides what might be called a *short cut*" (St Teresa, *Castle*, 5th M., ch. iii). We shall see later that this "suspension of powers" is not inaction, but a transformation of their ordinary mode of action, proper to the mystical states.

CHAPTER I

NATURE OF THE INFUSED PRAYER OF CONTEMPLATION

1. What It is Not

Prayer in the ordinary ways

ACCORDING to all the masters of the spiritual life, prayer in the ordinary ways of Christian perfection has four degrees in its advance towards perfection. None of these, however, is as yet the infused prayer of contemplation, because, far from being *passive* or *infused* into the soul, they are the product of its personal effort, assisted by the ordinary help of the grace of God.

1. *Vocal prayer*, or prayer recited more or less slowly and thoughtfully. This is the simplest degree, the most elementary of all: that of beginners.

2. *Mental prayer* or meditation is somewhat more advanced. It consists in a series of considerations on a given subject, according to a method which acts as a guide, and ends with practical reflections and resolutions. Its chief end is to enlighten and strengthen faith and to reform life.

3. *Affective prayer*, which only differs from the preceding in that a larger place is given to the affections of the heart and to the effort of the will. It has in view not so much the enlightenment of the soul or the strengthening of its convictions, as the rousing therein of its various emotions and the enkindling of divine love; above all, by means of holy colloquies with the Beloved.

4. Finally, the *prayer of simple regard* or of simplicity, less known than the others, which needs explaining in greater detail, because it is occasionally called, in a wide sense, by the name *contemplation* or *acquired contemplation*. There is thus a risk of confounding it with mystical or contemplative prayer, which, although a near neighbour, bordering perhaps, is nevertheless of quite another nature, because it is *passive or infused*, and is no longer, as are the preceding states, the fruit of labour aided by the ordinary help of grace.

In the prayer of simplicity, everything becomes more simple as intensity is increased. Here are found no longer those numerous and discursive considerations which belong to ordinary

meditation. A single idea suffices, and if there are still several, they are few in number and succeed one another more slowly, more gently, beneath a simple intuitive regard, in no way discursive. There is no more long and complicated reasoning; the mind sees and contemplates without dissertation.

In the same way there are no longer a multitude of complicated affections of psychological analysis. One only affection suffices, in which the soul is, as it were, for a long time embalmed, and if several follow each other, they are few, and become blended together like a single aroma. The result is, not indeed a passiveness, involuntary and imposed by God, a *ligature* of all our faculties, understanding, heart, and will; but a certain voluntary immobility or quiet, in a sole act of loving attention to the Beloved One. A typical example is that of the countrywoman, who stayed behind to contemplate the Tabernacle, and told the priest simply: "I see him, He sees me, and we are satisfied."

Analogous states in the natural order are very plentiful. They are all the result of our personal activity.

Thus a mother, guarding and watching the cradle of her child, is able to think of it and dwell on it with love, without reasoning or speaking, for quite a long time, even for hours. Two friends, when they meet again, are not occupied all the time with the interchange of new thoughts; they may occasionally remain for a long time near one another, quietly, and in silence, enjoying the happiness of being together. A great artist, spellbound at the sight of a beautiful landscape, remains motionless and silent in contemplation. Every intense emotion, either of wonder, joy, pain, or what not, is able to bring about this simple fixity of idea, together with the same immobility of memory and feeling. But it is the passion of love, above all, which enjoys this privilege in the highest degree. The thoughts dwell ever on the person loved from morning to night, and it is always the same unvarying image that reappears, without any desire for change being felt.

Not only is there nothing mysterious or difficult to understand in such a state, but we have all of us experienced it at some time in our lives. For instance, in our communions or our visits to the Blessed Sacrament, have we never had the feeling of being absorbed, at least for a few fleeting moments, in the presence and friendship of our Lord, without dreaming of reciting prayers or of meditating on any particular subject? Then it is that we have felt the profound difference, the opposition, between these two states—meditation on the presence of God

and actual experience of that presence. In the one case there is discursive reasoning, in the other contemplation by faith without reasoning.

We may even go further, and maintain that *every pious soul* may easily, at least for a few moments, act in this simple intuitive manner. It is enough, with the grace of God, to have a little more practice and progress in the interior life, to increase considerably the duration of our prayer of simplicity. Thus, for example, Brancati, the theologian so esteemed by Pope Benedict XIV, tells us: " After having considered in its various aspects a particular mystery, such as the Nativity or the Scourging, there is nothing to prevent us from viewing this mystery as a single whole, stopping, as it were, before it to gaze at it with the simple eye of faith, no longer in detail but in its entirety. With a little practice, therefore, anyone is capable of contemplation as well as of meditation."[1]

There is, therefore, an *imperceptible transition* between the four degrees of prayer of which this last is the highest. It is reached by a gradual process, because the *law of continuity* belongs to grace as it does to nature.

Once these heights are reached, where the air is so pure, we are able to realize the advantages they have for the heart and mind as well as for the will, in their striving after God and their perfect union. The heart feels itself more free to unbosom itself to God, because it is no longer taken up with reasoning and intellectual preoccupations. Sentiment is sometimes stifled by logic and syllogism. Again, the intelligence benefits. Doubtless it has fewer ideas, but they are deeper. A single idea may well be the summing-up of many others in one luminous whole. It is in this way that the scholar makes progress in knowledge, through the simplicity of his general ideas. Finally, the will is strengthened in the exercise of the virtues, above all through love. The more we love, the better we understand the demands made upon us by the love of God. All our faculties have attained their ideal. Then only do we reach that *spring of living water* which in Holy Scripture is the symbol of an intense spiritual life, according to St Teresa's just saying: " I do not call prayer made by thinking over a subject (with so much difficulty) *living water*."[2]

[1] Brancati, *De oratione christiana*, Opusc. III, ch. xvii.

[2] *Way*, ch. xix.—To understand this of passive or mystical contemplation alone would be to force the text, and to contradict other passages.

It is true that the prayer of simplicity, when prolonged, is *not suitable for everyone*, because all have not the same facility in its practice. This facility varies according to the character and natural dispositions of each one, and above all with his intellectual culture and mode of life. Furthermore, it is dangerous to try and force therein all souls without distinction, or even a whole community: for all have not received the same number of " talents."

Those with little memory or imagination are obliged to rest content with few words and few images, and thus show great aptitude for this simplified prayer. On the contrary, those with vivid imaginations and excitable temperaments are not able to concentrate upon it: their minds are filled with a constant flood of memories, images, and emotions, which keep them in a state of continual change.

In the same way, simple souls without great culture find themselves, in God's presence, content with few ideas and a deep sense of that presence. On the contrary, great theologians and preachers abound in ideas, reasonings, and texts, and cannot settle down to this simplicity. It is above all loving natures for whom this exercise, in which all is love without complicated reasonings, has the greatest attraction. Women, too, usually excel therein much rather than men.

Finally, an accidental cause occasionally renders this kind of prayer preferable: an illness which prevents brain-work and meditation, and thus brings a taste for the charm of pure and simple union with God. Or again, good Christian folk in their old age, who, during their lives, have meditated hundreds of times on the same truths; and who, being sufficiently convinced, henceforth embrace them as a whole in an act of contemplation, prolonging with intensity the single emotion which is awakened in their soul. Union with God is enough for them; meditation is not possible and is quite useless. Success and spiritual profit are, in fact, the touchstones by which the wise director is able to recognize the vocation of souls to such and such a degree of prayer, and therefore the call of grace and the will of God. He must never force divine grace any more than that which is natural. Never, therefore, to do oneself violence in order to forsake a state of prayer in which the soul feels itself happy, or stubbornly to remain there when the divine attraction has ceased: such is the fundamental rule of wise direction.

Certain *timorous souls*, it is true, being once raised to the prayer

of simplicity, may be inclined to doubt the utility of that state, in which they fear lurk inaction, idleness, laziness, and waste of time. But it only appears to be so, and such novices should be reassured. One single action is not inaction; on the contrary, it is action intensified, in which all the activities of the soul are concentrated on one point. In this prayer the same things are produced as in ordinary meditation, enlightenment of the mind, warmth of heart, and aspiration of will; but they are produced in a simpler, gentler, and less apparent way. Work that is within makes less noise, and is less observed outwardly; but it is real and more intense work.

Observe the silent brush of the painter; the work, still more silent, of the light and warmth of the sun in the germination of plants, the opening of flowers, and ripening of fruits; from which it will be easy to understand that the greatest works of grace, like those of nature, are performed silently, and that often sound and effort are in inverse ratio to the work produced. It is quite easy to understand by experiment that this concentration of all the active faculties on one single object has nothing in common with that idleness of the indolent who lend themselves to every vague dream, and accept passively and without control every imagination which passes through their minds.

Once more, then, let us reassure the timorous consciences of certain penitents who accuse themselves thus: " I hardly do anything in my prayers except love God." Yet there is no more to be done, and nothing else that is more perfect, more acceptable to God, or of greater benefit to all; for the stronger the love in the soul the more it spreads radiance around it, both in the family and in the various duties of Christian society.

Not only must these souls be reassured and their fears dispelled, but also they must be *aided* and *led* past the difficulties and through the labour and aridity which they are likely to meet in their path. Great directors of souls have not failed in doing this. Bossuet drew up for the Visitandines of Meaux the " short method of making prayer in faith." St Francis de Sales gave the rules for the prayer of " simple yielding to God." St Teresa has also treated of the prayer of " recollection," which are so many different names for the same prayer of simplicity. To these we shall refer the reader again.

None of the four degrees of prayer which we have just rapidly described — *vocal*, *mental*, *affective*, nor even the

prayer of *acquired contemplation* or *simple regard*—are yet the *infused* prayer of contemplation; but this last *is not simply a higher* and eminent *degree* of ordinary prayer. Otherwise contemplatives, when they enter this new way, would not have the sensation, so often described by them, of entrance into a sphere altogether new, astonishing, incomprehensible;[1] but, on the contrary, they would have the feeling of what has been, at least in part, a *former experience*. They would not experience that anxiety, unrest, and tremor, which is almost always felt in the presence of a mysterious and unforeseen reality. Nor would they feel the crying need of an enlightened guidance, the lack of which was, for St Teresa, so long and cruel a martyrdom. The science of mysticism itself would be considerably simplified. Instead of the enormous folios which the great teachers have devoted to it, and the endless discussions to which it has given rise, but a few lines would suffice in order to refer the reader to the principles and ordinary rules of ascetic theology; for a new degree in faith and fervour, however high, would not be able to change essentially the principles and rules of Christian piety. *Plus aut minus non mutat speciem.*

As it is not possible to reduce mystical contemplation to the *four ordinary prayers*, nor to a *higher degree* of them, we must seek it further afield, in some other gift of God. And since theologians usually distinguish two kinds of these—the graces called *gratis datae*, which are given gratuitously, without any merit on our part, for the advantage of our neighbour—such as prophecy, the gift of tongues, etc.—and the graces called *gratum Deo facientes*,[2] which are intended for our personal sanctification, and whose increase in our souls must always be merited—we must, without hesitation, exclude the former, and clearly affirm that contemplation is not a grace given for our neighbour's advantage, *gratis data*, but for our own sanctification, *gratum faciens*.

In the first place let us beware of a grave misunderstanding. *A priori* classifications too often run the risk of being incomplete, and observation of the facts necessitates our introducing at a

[1] "A soul, when our Lord begins to bestow these graces upon it, does not understand them, and does not know what to do with itself" (St Teresa, *Life*, ch. xiv). It is the beginning of the *Great Darkness*.

[2] Gratia *gratum faciens* est per quam ipse homo Deo conjungitur, et *gratis data* per quam unus homo alteri ad salutem cooperatur (St Thomas, I-II, q. cxi, a. 1).

later stage middle terms formerly unsuspected. Such is the case here. There may be graces tending to our personal sanctification—such as the passive and involuntary recollection of all our powers, so well described by St Teresa—which, being neither absolutely nor even ordinarily necessary for obtaining sanctity, are favours *gratis datae* in this sense alone, that is, gratuitously given, without any merit on our part. We shall have occasion to examine whether contemplation does not enter into this third category. But to exclude it *a priori*, as is too often done, would be only a *petitio principii*, and a prejudgement overthrown by the facts.

Moreover, among all possible modes of these graces of personal sanctification, those must at once be excluded which, being *invisible or unconscious*, escape the observation or experience of the contemplative. In fact, in such a case, the novelty, being in his regard unconscious, could not bring about any of that unrest and astonishment, or those torments described by St Teresa and all the mystical saints. And also the fact of such a mode escaping the observation of both director and directed alike would prevent it from being to them a means of distinguishing between mystical and ordinary prayer.

This remark is of the highest importance in order to avoid the regrettable confusions of certain discussions as to the *two ways*.

When, therefore, we describe, in common with all theologians with practical experience, mystical contemplation as *infused*, *passive*, and *supernatural*, the reader must supply mentally the further qualifications *experimentally*, *manifestly*, and *evidently*, or rather *consciously*. Now this is a new method which is not found elsewhere.

In fact, there are other gifts of sanctification in the Christian soul, such, for instance, as actual graces, sanctifying grace itself, infused virtues, the ordinary modes of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the like, which are also *infused*, *passive*, and *supernatural ;* but in a way that is invisible, insensible, unconscious, and one that we cannot know by experience. Theological reasoning alone is able to convince us of their existence, not direct observation.

Thus, each day, when we perform some meritorious action with the help of ordinary grace, or even under the influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we are conscious of free self-determination, of acting by ourselves, with greater or less

attraction, so that the supernatural co-operation of God completely escapes our inward sense. It would even seem that God no more co-operates in these supernatural actions than he does in the ordinary actions of living and breathing.

On the contrary, as St Teresa insists, having herself experienced it, " our Lord now will have the soul *to see*, as it were, with the naked eye (or realize by some other spiritual sense) this particular help of grace."[1] The contemplative soul is then *conscious of being passive* in the hands of God, of receiving into itself an infused power, raising it to supernatural and superhuman acts of knowledge and of love. It is the *sensation of the divine* or the experimental knowledge of the action of God in our souls.[2]

Without this *important distinction* it would be necessary to declare that *every* action done under the unconscious influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is truly mystical, which no one would dare to uphold.[3] And this would lead to classing the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit in the domain proper to mysticism, whilst the *virtues* would belong to asceticism. But this division is too simple and insufficient to explain the facts observed by St Teresa, as the whole of this work will show clearly enough. Moreover, it would bring us to strange conclusions, for since the *gifts* are necessary to all spiritual life, and can be granted to discursive prayers, as to prayers of simple regard, we should have *infused* and mystical *meditations* as well as *infused contemplations*. Nay, more, the martyrs and virgins who exercise the gift of *fortitude* to an heroic degree, and even all good Christians, docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, would be mystics and contemplatives without knowing it.[4]

[1] *Life*, ch. xiv.

[2] " In the mystical states there is a genuine experience of the supernatural. There are touches of God, bearing in themselves the proofs that they are from God. But this sense of the supernatural, this taste for virtue this kind of direct contact with the presence of God, this experience of the divine action of God in us or with us, all this is not the ordinary way of Christian life " (Bainvel, *Nature et surnaturel*, ch. x, p. 318). (Course delivered at the Canonical Faculty of Theology of Paris.) " What is the mystical life, indeed, but the life of grace that has become conscious through experience? And what is the life of heaven but the life of grace, expanded, made perfect, and come to the end of its slow and obscure evolution?" (*ibid.*, ch. ii, p. 76).

[3] An attempt, nevertheless, has been made to uphold it, by limiting the influence to the three gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, but without success (*Revue August.*, December, 1902). Contemplation is a *special mode* of these gifts, as we shall see.

[4] " Certain simplifying minds might be inclined to solve the most

From a practical point of view the usefulness of such a division would be non-existent; for no director would be able to distinguish whether an action were due to a *virtue* or to a *gift*.[1] We must, therefore, seek elsewhere, outside the invisible and unconscious world, for the distinctive character belonging to mystical contemplation, after having thus eliminated those which have no claim to be so. And having now stated what it is not, it remains to state *what it is.*

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difficult problems of spirituality by departing from the teaching of St Thomas on the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (clearly distinct from graces *gratis datae*), without giving sufficient consideration to the wonderful descriptions given by St Teresa, St John of the Cross, St Francis de Sales, and other great saints, of the different degrees of the spiritual life, notably that of mystical union. And as, according to St Thomas and tradition, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are in every soul in a state of grace, there might perhaps be an inclination to hold that the mystical state or infused contemplation is very frequent, and to confound with it that which is only its forerunner, like the prayer of simplicity so well described by Bossuet" (Garrigou-Lagrange, *La vie spirituelle*, no. 1, p. 16). This avowal is to be noted: the ordinary mode of the gifts is only a prelude to mysticism.

[1] We know that, by baptism, God infuses into the soul, with sanctifying grace, the theological and moral virtues, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost (prudence, wisdom, etc.), which are afterwards to be set working by means of actual graces of greater or lesser force. Here is the difference between the *virtues* and the *gifts :* by the virtues we direct ourselves, actively, under the guidance of reason enlightened by faith in a *human manner;* by the gifts we are led rather by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and more or less passively : *In donis Spiritus Sancti, mens humana non se habet ut movens, sed magis ut mota* (II-II, q. lii, a. 2). However, according to their ordinary mode, the passiveness is never complete, and the act remains vital: *Sic agitur homo quod etiam agit in quantum est liberi arbitrii* (I-II, q. lxviii, a. 3, ad 2). It is a *superhuman manner. Dona a virtutibus distinguuntur in hoc quod virtutes perficiunt ad actus humano modo sed dona ultra humanum modum* (*in III*, dist. xxxiv, q. i, a. 1). We should note, however, that although the virtues are not able to accomplish the acts of the gifts, the gifts, on the contrary, are able to perform the acts of the virtues and all the actions of our moral life (I-II, q. lxviii, a. 2, ad 1). (Card. Billot, *De virtut. infusis*, q. lxviii, p. 169 *seqq.*)

CHAPTER II

NATURE OF THE INFUSED PRAYER OF CONTEMPLATION (*continued*)

2. What It Is

WHAT, then, is this new phenomenon of mystical contemplation?

The answer has been given that it is made up of two essential elements: *light and infused love, obtained without reasoning*. This is certainly true, but is still too vague and incomplete. All grace springing from light and love, obtained without reasoning, is not on that account mystical. All good Christians have daily experience of it without being contemplatives. And this definition would end by confusing the mystical ways with all fervent interior life, or in no longer distinguishing between the two kinds of contemplation, *active* and *passive*.

In order to prevent so serious a confusion, the Carmelite Congress at Madrid (March, 1923), which had the right to speak in the name of that Teresian school to which we glory to belong, taught that the light of contemplation is distinguished from other supernatural infused lights in that it produces, not an abstract, but a concrete knowledge; it is *an experimental knowledge of divine things or realities*.[1] It is this definition of the famous Congress which we are about to develop in the following articles, in which we shall study the theological *notion* of contemplation, its *object*, its *causes*, its *effects*, its *duration*, and what *subjects* are the most apt to receive this divine gift.

[1] "(1) Infused contemplation is the mystical operation *par excellence*. (2) It is the experimental knowledge of divine things (or realities), produced by God supernaturally in the soul, and it is the state of closest approach and union between God and the soul which can be attained in this life" (*Conclusiones aprobadas*. . . . In *Mesajero de Santa Teresa*, March 15, 1923, p. 22). See below, App. VI.

§ 1

The notion of the infused prayer of contemplation

In its *widest sense*, as used in common speech and even by philosophers, contemplation is a profound absorption of the mind, brought about by the striking intuition of some wonderful object, above all of some grand and imposing object, which enraptures us. Thus have we contemplated in silence, in a pure intuition and without reasoning, the immensity of the ocean, the brilliance and extent of the heavens on a beautiful summer night, the vast horizons of the mountains; or yet again some lofty truth, sparkling with light, like that of *pure act*, the principle of *all that is*.

Theologians, however, in making choice of this word *contemplation* in the ordinary or philosophic language, and transferring it to the supernatural domain and to theological language, have been guided by the law of analogy. Supernatural and mystical contemplation, indeed, must have some analogy with contemplation in the popular and philosophical sense; without this there would be no reason for so naming it. They first of all applied it to all fairly fervent *affective* prayer, and especially to the prayer of *simplicity*. But little by little, as mystical theology became distinguished from ascetic theology, the word *contemplation* has been more often restricted to that higher state of infused or mystical prayer, the nature and definition of which we are seeking.

Already St Teresa habitually used it in this very restricted way, whilst other writers continued to understand it in a wide sense, from which, unless care be taken, there is a risk of ambiguity.

What, then, is contemplation, understood in its *restricted and mystical sense?*

We can only give an answer by inquiring of those saints to whom the experience has been vouchsafed, and by seeking an explanation from mystical theologians of the highest authority.

In the first rank of these shines with incomparable brightness the Angelic Doctor, *St Thomas*, who united with a profound knowledge of theology an experience of mystical gifts. It is true that he never treated *ex professo* of mysticism, but all that he has said of it here and there in his writings, though incomplete, will give us valuable light.

Here, then, is his definition, first a more general one. "Contemplation," he says, "is a simple intellectual *intuition* of truth . . ., ending in an *affective movement* of the heart: *Contemplatio pertinet ad ipsum simplicem intuitum veritatis . . . in affectu terminatur.*"[1]

With further precision of thought, he defines contemplation, by a definition already given by Dionysius the Mystic, as an *intuitive or experimental sense of the divine.* He does not hesitate, indeed, to make his own the word "sensation" of the famous mystic: "Hierotheus has become instructed in divine things, not only by learning them (in books) but by feeling them and remaining passive under the action of God. *Non solum discens, sed et patiens divina.* *Οὐ μόνον μαθων, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάθων θεία.*[2] He then adds by way of explanation: "It is only by receiving their contact and impress passively that he has learnt divine things." *Didicit divina ex compassione ad ipsa.*[3]

Again, he comments on Dionysius in these terms: "There is a knowledge of God which is obtained by ignorance (or forgetfulness of all our knowledge), and by virtue of an incomprehensible union (contact) with the Divine, far above the nature of our mind. . . . In thus knowing God, the soul is enlightened by the resplendent abysses of divine Wisdom, which still cannot be fathomed": *Cognoscimus Deum per ignorantiam, per quamdam unitionem ad divina supra naturam mentis. . . . Et sic cognoscens Deum, in tali statu cognitionis, illuminatur ab ipsa profunditate divinae Sapientiae, quam perscrutari non possumus.*[4] The same teaching is repeated a score of times in the *Summa Theologica:* "When all discourse has ceased, the gaze of the mind is fixed on the contemplation of the sole and most simple Truth": *Cessante discursu, figitur ejus intuitus in contemplatione unius simplicis veritatis.*[5]

In comparing these various quotations, which throw mutual light on each other, we are able to conclude that mystical contemplation is: 1. An *intuition*, not indeed of the senses, but of the mind, comparable afar to the external senses in that they reach directly the end proper to them.

2. It is a *pure* intuition, excluding all effort of seeking, all reasoning, all discursive action, and may even exclude every

[1] II-II, q. clxxx, a. 3, ad 1, ad 3.
[2] *De div. nom.*, c. ii, par. 9, col. 647, t. 1.
[3] II-II, q. xlv, a. 2; q. xcvii, a. 2, ad 2
[4] *De div. nom.*, ch. vii, 3 and 4; ch. iv, vii, xi.
[5] II-II, q. clxxx, a. 6, ad 2.

sensible image, as we shall point out in its place. But this intuition in no way excludes emotions of the heart; rather does it produce them as a necessary sequence: *Voluntas sequitur intellectum;* or rather it requires them as an indispensable disposition and preparation. Also the emotional element, which is so important, is implied in this definition of St Thomas: it is a *loving* intuition.

3. It is an *experimental* intuition, which attains like sensation, not an abstract, but a real and actual object, and attains it *directly*, *i.e.*, without any reasoning. This is a chief point. We know that according to modern philosophy, since Descartes, sensation is only a pleasant or painful emotion, from which we conclude by more or less instinctive inference the existence of a cause—logically unknown—which has produced it. According to traditional philosophy, on the contrary, sensation, before it is emotional, is directly intuitive; there is in it evidence of receptivity, passiveness, of feeling something not oneself, which is entirely wanting whether in emotion or in the pure representation of an image or concept. So that, according to the schools and to ourselves, " sensation of the divine " will always signify direct or experimental intuition of the divine, and certainly not the emotion which is the result of it. It is not that all *quasi*-experimental knowledge, which from an *affective state* concludes the presence of God, and mounts by a more or less rapid inference from effects to their cause, must be excluded from contemplation. St Thomas appeals to it very often, but he expressly states that it is only a *secondary* object, *preparatory* to the primary, as we shall see later. Moreover, pure intuition, *simplex intuitus*, by its very definition, excludes such reasoning.

4. The object of this intuition, then, is transcendent, it is *the divine*, and, as will be seen in the next article, according to St Thomas, it is God himself obscurely perceived, not face to face and in his essence, but in his created action in our souls, as an agent is perceived in his action. We recognize God by his divine touch, as we recognize a friend in the darkness by the touch of his hand.

5. Finally, this intuition is *passive*, and St Thomas rightly insists on this involuntary and conscious passiveness, which characterizes either the intuitive element or the affective element of contemplation, and would alone be sufficient to distinguish it from all the fundamentally active exercises of the ascetic life.

First of all, the luminous element of mystical contemplation has been compared by the same Dionysius and St Thomas to a sensation received passively.[1] And it is easy to understand that the intuition of some outside light which strikes us, or some scene which unfolds itself to our view, or any other sensation, presents of its essence a character of complete passiveness. When God makes himself known or speaks to a soul, it is enough that it should open the eyes of its mind and the ears of its heart. God alone does all the rest. In vocal or mental prayer, " with the assistance of God's grace," says St Teresa, " we can help ourselves to a certain extent; not so in contemplation: this is beyond our natural powers, and he does all."[2] And St John of the Cross repeats: " God communicates himself to the soul, thus *passive*, as the light of the sun to him whose eyes are open."[3]

There is the same note of passiveness, as St Thomas constantly repeats, in the *affective element of mysticism* as there is in the cognitive. We read, for instance, in the small work in which he deals with the question *ex professo :* " In the lower degrees of prayer the soul loves and is loved, seeks and is sought, calls and is called; but in this degree, by a wonderful and unspeakable process, it rises and is *raised*, seizes and is *seized*, presses closely and is tightly *bound*, and with a knot of love ties itself to God, being with him as the alone with the Alone."[4]

It is impossible to express more clearly than this the radical distinction which exists between active or *acquired* contemplation and that which is passive or *infused ;*[5] between that which we produce by our own effort, and the aid of ordinary grace, in the prayer *of simplicity*, and that which is produced in us without our help by the extraordinary or mystical grace of the Most High. These are two different methods, or rather roads, by which we are able to arrive at the same end, which is holiness or union with God: sometimes by the ordinary way and the high road, sometimes by the " short cut " of which St Teresa speaks, in which God gives us " wings " and thus dispenses us from going on foot; above all, that he may

[1] *Intelligere est quoddam pati. . . . Pati est recipere* (*De Verit.*, q. xxvi, a. 3, ad 17; *In III*, dist. xv, q. 2, a. 1). *Quasi species* (*impressa*) *rei visae* (St Thomas, *De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 1).

[2] *Way*, ch. xxv. [3] *Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. xv.

[4] *Opusc.* lxv.

[5] Benedict XIV formally teaches this distinction between *acquired* and *infused* contemplation, which he considers is the common teaching of theologians (*De beat. et can. sanctorum*, III, xxvi, n. 7. See below, Second Section, ch. iii and iv, and Appendix VI).

cause the wonders of his goodness and his power to shine forth before the eyes of all.[1]

Let us rest content at present with this definition of St Thomas—not that it would not be useful to have those of St Augustine, St Bernard, St Teresa and St John of the Cross, Hugh and Richard of St Victor, Philip of the Trinity, Sandaeus, the Ven. John of St Samson, Cardinal Bona, St Bonaventure, St Francis de Sales, Gerson, Père Nouet, and others,[2] but their statements would take us

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. iii.

[2] St Augustine: "It is a holy inebriation, which withdraws the soul from the liquid flow of temporal things, and has, as its principle, the intuition of the eternal light of wisdom" (*Contra Faustum*, xii, 48). St Bernard: "It is a raising up and suspending of the mind in God himself, which is a foretaste of the joys of the eternal mansions" (*Scala claustralium*). Hugh of St Victor makes his own the definition of St Augustine, and adds: "The eye of contemplation sees God and the things which are in God" (*Expositio in hier. S. Dionysii*, l. iii; *P.L.*, vol. clxxv, col. 976). Richard of St Victor: "It is a free and unfettered gaze of the spirit, penetrating every part of the spiritual things which it considers; suspended in a vision of things divine" (*Benjamin Major*, l. i, ch. iv). St Bonaventure: "It is an act of the intelligence, which, freed from every hindrance and purified by grace, directs its gaze on the vision of things eternal, and remains suspended there in admiration" (*Tertio itin.*, dist. 2). St Teresa: "When God seemed to me to be so near, I thought it impossible. Not to believe that he was present, was not in my power; for it seemed to me, as it were, evident that I felt there his very presence" (*Life*, ch. xviii). St John of the Cross: "Mystical theology is an experimental perception of God" (*Super Magnificat*, tract. vii). St Francis de Sales: "Contemplation is no other thing than a loving, simple, and permanent attention of the spirit to divine things" (*Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. iii). Gerson: "The object of mystical contemplation is an experimental knowledge of God in the embrace of an intuitive love" (*Theol. myst.*, no. 28). Philip of the Trinity: "In the mystical union God is perceived by an interior touch and an embrace; he is, after a manner, felt by the soul. . . . The soul knows him manifestly because God then gives it the certitude of his presence" (*Disc. prelim.*, art. 8). Ven. John of St Samson: "Mystical theology considered in its essence is nothing else than God ineffably perceived" (*Maximes*, ch. xxi). Sandaeus: "Mystical union is an experimental and direct perception of God by a secret clasping, a mutual embrace between God, who is the spouse, and the soul, which is the bride. And this postulates the presence of God" (l. ii, *Comm.* 6, exerc. 15). Père Nouet: "God, who before was in the righteous soul like a hidden treasure, presents himself thereto, by means of sanctifying grace, like a treasure that is found. He enlightens it, touches it, embraces it, and penetrates it" (*Conduite de l'homme d'oraison*). Card. Bona: "It is a sweet, lovable, and tranquil vision of the eternal Truth, which the mind perceives by means

too far. It is enough for us to know that they in no way contradict that of St Thomas, and that they only add to it descriptions and accessory details, which would uselessly complicate this account.

Counter-evidence for this Catholic idea of mystical contemplation is furnished by our rationalist adversaries themselves, whom the study or the rapid reading of St Teresa and her rivals has led loyally to formulate the following admissions and doctrinal approximations:

Cousin, in Dochez' dictionary, defines mysticism as "the claim to know God face to face, without any intermediary." *Littré* adopts this definition of Cousin, to which he adds: "Secret communications between man and the Divinity."

Larousse, in the old Dictionary, says: "It is a religious opinion which admits direct communication between God and the creature." And the new Larousse is still more precise: "It is an intuitive knowledge which comes to pass in the silence of the discursive operations of the understanding." This definition reminds us of the *simplex intuitus* of St Thomas or the "intuitive sensation" of Dionysius.

W. James[1] declares that "*consciousness* of (divine) illumination is for us the essential mark of mystical states." We have just cited an analogous statement from St Teresa. And in the same work he puts very forcibly the mystical question itself. "It must always remain an open question," he says, "whether mystical states may not be . . . windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world." A question, he adds, which freethinkers should not deny *a priori* any more than the blind have the right to deny the existence of light or colour.[2] This would be the "theopathic state."

Finally, *M. Boutroux* teaches that "the essential phenomenon of mysticism is what is called *ecstasy*, a state in which, all communication with exterior things being broken, the soul

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of a pure regard, without innumerable reasonings, and which it penetrates with great love and equal admiration, and with such certainty and clearness that it is raised to the face-to-face intuition of God; not, indeed, to the extent of the glory of the blessed, but in a lesser light, still obscure and based on faith, which there finds its perfecting and its great enlightenment" (*Via compendii ad Deum*, c. ix, no. 4, p. 124). Schram, Scaramelli, and others express themselves in similar language.

[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 408, n. 2. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 428.

feels that it communicates with an internal object, which is the infinite Being, God."[1]

All these attempts at definition, from the pens of laymen, however imperfect they may be, appear to us to do involuntary homage to the definitions of Dionysius the Mystic and St Thomas, still more exact and expressive, concerning the mystical experiences of our saints: "Mystical contemplation is the intuitive or experimental sense of the divine."

To suppress this conscious intuition and to preserve only the subjective emotions and acts of love which result from it, would be to distort the experiences and seriously to falsify the testimony of those contemplative saints to whom they have been granted.

Which of the *two constituent elements* that the Thomist definition has just given us, that of the experimental *intuition* of God, or the embrace of divine *love* which follows it, is the primary and more important? This is an old controversy between Thomists and Scotists. But we strongly stand, with St Thomas, for the primacy of the intelligence. It opens the way and the will follows: *nihil volitum nisi praecognitum* (see *Second Section*, ch. xiii). It is enough for us here to state that the two elements are indispensable, that they are ordained one for the other, and that they mutually complete each other, for if knowledge generates love, love afterwards directs knowledge and thus brings about greater knowledge;[2] that between them,

[1] *La Psychologie du mysticisme*, p. 6.

At a meeting of the *Société française de philosophie* (Bulletin of January, 1906, p. 17) this is how M. Boutroux, with great exactness, analyses St Teresa: "There results from this action of God within us a supernatural knowledge which is obtained by means of *intellectual intuition*. St Teresa has very clearly the idea of a *perception*, other than that of the senses, of which the senses are not capable, and which is given to the *intelligence alone*. . . . Her teaching is a mysticism which passes beyond contemplation and reaches to action, and in which contemplation has for its end the putting of the soul in *possession* of the internal and divine principle, so that it may perform its creative and all-powerful work." It would be difficult better to express the "transformation" of the soul, and the deification of all its powers, in the mystical ways.

[2] *Vita contemplativa "principaliter" in operatione intellectus consistit; et hoc ipsum nomen contemplationis importat quod visionem significat* (St Thomas, *In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2). *Vita contemplativa licet "essentialiter" consistat in intellectu, principium tamen habet in affectu, inquantum videlicet aliquis ex charitate ad Dei contemplationem incitatur. Et quia finis respondet principio, inde est quod etiam*

however, there is a certain independence: thus such and such a degree of knowledge does not necessarily imply the same degree of love. Some contemplation is more enlightened, some more ardent:[1] the first, which is attributed to the Cherubim, has been named cherubic; the second seraphic, because tradition has assigned it to the Seraphim.

In fact, either of the two elements permits of *numerous degrees.*

The former, intuition, more or less obscure at first, may afterwards become more or less clear. Whence the comparison of the *five spiritual senses*, so often used by St Teresa and all the mystical writers, following St Augustine. According to their inward experiences there is a spiritual *sight*, *touch*, and *hearing*, as well as a *taste* and *scent* (see *Second Section*, ch. x).

Thus sight is the most enlightening of the senses, and touch is the most obscure, yet the most certain of its object and the most convincing; hearing of words is the most instructive; taste and scent are the sweetest and the most enjoyable. That, however, which all have in common is an experimental intuition of the *presence* of God, which has enabled the saints to say that God is seen, heard, tasted, breathed, and held in a sweet embrace, although his *essence* remains unknown.

All these phenomena, however, imply a higher light than that of the human intelligence; a light which is not the laborious product of the activity of the mind, an *infused* light, received passively by him who contemplates it; so that the mind of man is truly passive beneath the sway of this divine touch which penetrates it, enlightens it, and instructs it without labour.

The *second element* is the affective reaction of the heart and of the will, which produces wonder and a fire of love capable of fixing, binding, or suspending all the other powers of the soul.

First, *admiration* or wonder. According to the definition of St Thomas,[2] admiration is a kind of astonishment and fear which invades us at a sight which surpasses both our conception and our strength. Such is the cause of the pang which takes possession of the soul at the sight of a higher light.

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terminus et finis contemplativae vitae habent esse *in affectu, dum sc. aliquis in visione rei amatae delectatur, et ipsa delectatio rei visae amplius excitat amorem* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 7, ad 1).

[1] St Thomas himself admits that love may be greater than knowledge: *Contingit quod aliquid plus ametur quam cognoscatur, quia potest perfecte amari etiamsi non perfecte cognoscatur* (I-II, q. xxvii, a. 2, ad 2).

[2] II-II, q. clxxx, a. 3, ad 3; *In II*, dist. xviii, q. 1, a. 3.

The vastness and suddenness of the vision, the greatness and majesty of the object which unfolds itself, throw us into a state of stupor and astonishment. This admiration, however, is accompanied by *love;* it is completed in the sweet and tranquil delight of its well-being. The soul raised to contemplation possesses the object loved and rejoices in it. Whence the holy intoxication of love described in the *Canticle of Canticles*, and the sweet repose which the soul experiences on the bosom of God.

The characteristic effect of this holy entrancement, of which all the mystics speak, is the more or less complete *suspension*, or, as they term it, the *ligature*, of several, or of all, the powers of the soul, which become passive—that is to say, become deprived of spontaneous action and able only to receive divine impulsion. In this state it is impossible freely to direct either the mind or heart; they are fixed in God. Even more, the external and internal senses may become subject to this binding: in one degree, that of ecstasy, the limbs remain motionless, words and prayer fade on the lips, the heart itself beats more slowly, the five senses are blunted and appear insensible, the memory forgets everything else, the imagination itself is bound. One sole act remains, that of conscious contemplation.

But here we touch on the highest marvels of contemplation, the study of which must be reserved until another part of this work.

To *sum up* this doctrine in a word: mystical contemplation consists in an *experimental sensation of the divine*, that is, in an immediate intuition by the consciousness, more or less clear or obscure, of the *presence* in our souls of God or a supernatural object, the *essence* whereof remains unknown, which produces a sentiment of admiration and love, suspending more or less the powers of the soul.

The essential difference between the prayer of mystical contemplation and common or philosophical contemplation or ordinary prayer is thus seen.

Philosophical contemplation is of the natural order, mystical of the supernatural. The former has as its object an idea, such as the idea of God; the second has the very reality of the active presence in us of the divine Being. The former is produced by the reasoning or intuitive effort of man's genius; the second is a gift of God and the product of his supernatural

action in the soul of his choice: also it is common to the ignorant and the learned, whilst the former is the privilege of the learned only. Finally, the one is of a purely speculative order, the other finds its end in the love of God and in sacrifice. It is no longer only an exercise of the intelligence, but of holiness and union with God.

Its difference from meditation and the prayer of simplicity is no less obvious. Meditation seeks, contemplation has found; meditation aspires to enjoyment, contemplation enjoys; meditation is a laborious effort, contemplation is a repose; meditation is work with fruit, contemplation is fruit without labour; meditation reasons, contemplation sees intuitively; meditation and the prayer of simplicity are an abstract knowledge, contemplation is a concrete and experimental knowledge; meditation makes us think of the divine Friend, contemplation makes us feel him present and acting; meditation and the prayer of simplicity are the fruit of our industry, contemplation is passive; it is a gift of God which operates in us and without our help, if we are docile.

§ 2

The chief object of the infused prayer of contemplation

We have just noted in passing that mystical contemplation has for its object the presence of God himself or of some other supernatural reality. This doctrine is of the highest importance, and one that must be developed and justified with care. Let us consider first the *presence of God*, both because all creation is seen in him as in its first cause, or seen at least in the divine light; and also because it is the more difficult problem.

Is it quite true that, in mystical contemplation, we are no longer—as in ordinary prayer—in the presence of an imagination or of a simple idea, but of a transcendent reality; that we do not only think of the presence of God, but that we experience it within us; that this real presence is felt sometimes by a more or less obscure interior touch, sometimes by a more enlightening sense such as that of spiritual sight?

Is a certain *immediate apprehension of God*, the face-to-face intuition of whom is the source of the happiness of the blessed in heaven, possible, at least in some much lower and very imperfect degree, for man whilst still a wayfarer on this earth? This is the *great question* which it behoves us here to solve.

With this end in view, let us begin first by hearing the *description* of the mystical facts, given by those privileged saints who have experienced them; afterwards we will examine the *explanations* of those facts, which they themselves have given. In the first case—let it be noted—they speak as true witnesses; and, as we are unable to consider them as either deceivers or deceived, their testimony must needs be accepted. In the second case their explanations of these same facts no longer enforce themselves upon us in the same way: they are now no longer witnesses, but philosophical or theological thinkers, whose theories are not beyond criticism. Thus, for example, in visions the *object seen* or the *manner of vision*, with or without images, is a question of direct observation and testimony, whilst enquiry into the *causes* of these phenomena belongs to the domain of reasoning and criticism.

This criticism has here free play, provided that it loyally respects the facts, without the misrepresentation which occasionally occurs under the pretext of not understanding them. The true scientific procedure requires, indeed, that we should accept all duly authenticated facts, even though they are not yet understood. As Aristotle says, we must admit the fact of an eclipse, even though its explanation should not yet be forthcoming, and recall, as St Teresa does so often, that God is able to do infinitely more than we can understand.

The *facts* of the manifestation of the divine Being throughout the ages are innumerable. Without going back to Moses and the holy prophets of the Old Testament, concerning whom the Apostle says that they had direct intercourse with God,[1] the New Testament gives us many examples, of which the best known and the most typical instance is that of *St Paul*, rapt to the third heaven—that is, to the dwelling-place of the blessed, where it was vouchsafed to him to contemplate the very light of God and to hear mysterious words which human language could not express. In anticipation of a future objection of philosophers and theologians, he is careful to add that he does not know if this rapture was in or out of the body and its organs of sense, which again is a proof of the purely intellectual and imageless character of his vision of God.[2]

[1] *Heb.* i, 1.

[2] *Cf.* St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxv, a. 3, ad 2. *In Epist. 2 Cor.* c. xii. III, q. ix, a. 2, c; *De Verit.*, q. xiii, a. 3, 4, 5; II-II, q. clxxv, a. 5, concl. etc.

All the mystical saints since St Paul have never hesitated to make use of such phrases as *seeing*, *hearing*, or *touching* a transcendental divine reality. And, as has already been stated, God was not only seen and heard by them, but also *tasted*, *breathed*, or *held* in sweet embrace. Now all these spiritual senses are compared to the five senses of the body, because, like them, they give an experimental knowledge of the *presence* though not of the *essence* of the objects sensed, a knowledge which is *direct*, through their action which strikes us, or *impressed species*, and without any intermediate image or *expressed species*, to use the expression so dear to the traditional philosophy of Aristotle and St Thomas.[1] If not, their objects would only be observed through their images, as in a glass, and the vision would no longer be experimental but imaginative.

On this capital point the descriptions of the mystics are unanimous, not only as regards the higher degrees of contemplation but also the lower. We give here a few examples out of many, for the only difficulty is to choose:

" So, in the beginning, when I attained to some degree of supernatural prayer—I speak of the prayer of quiet," writes *St Teresa*,[2] " I thought that I *had a sense* of the presence of God; *this was true*, and I contrived to be in a state of recollection before him."—" God . . . will have the soul comprehend that his Majesty is so *near to it*. . . . Our Emperor and Lord will have us now understand that he understands us; and also have us understand what his presence bringeth about."[3]—" *Some little knowledge of the blissfulness of glory* is communicated to [the soul]."[4]—" This prayer is a supernatural state to which no effort of our own can raise us, because here the soul rests in peace—or rather, our Lord *gives it peace by his presence*, as he did to the just man Simeon. Thus all the faculties are calmed, and in some manner, in no way connected with the exterior senses, the spirit realizes that it is close to its God, and that if it drew but a little nearer to him, it would become *one with him* by union. . . . But the Babe himself gave the old man (Simeon) light to recognize him, as he enlightens the soul to recognize him during the prayer of quiet."[5]

" God visits the soul in a manner which prevents its doubting,

[1] See later on this theory of *impressed* and *expressed species* (Appendix IV).

[2] *Life*, ch. xxii. This expression clearly indicates that prayer of quiet is the first degree of mystical or infused contemplation.

[3] *Life*, ch. xiv. [4] *Ibid.* [5] *Way*, ch. xxxi.

on returning to itself, that *it dwelt in him and that he was within it*. . . . I know of someone [herself] who was unaware of God's being in all things by *presence*, power and essence, yet *was firmly convinced of it* by a divine favour of this sort. She asked an ill-instructed priest of the kind I mentioned to tell her in what way God dwelt within us: he . . . answered that the Almighty was only present in us by grace. Yet so strong was her conviction of the truth learnt during her prayer that she did not believe him."[1]

This sensation of presence is not yet a true *vision*, as St Teresa was careful to observe several times, still less a *face-to-face* vision, but a more obscure sensation, in spite of its certainty, like a touch that reveals the presence of an object.

" I stood nought knowing," exclaims *St John of the Cross*, " all science transcending. If you would listen, this sovereign wisdom doth consist in a *sense* profound of the essence of God."[2]—" O gentle hand, O delicate touch, which has the savour of eternal life!"[3] And elsewhere he delights to develop the same experience: " What the soul tastes now in this touch of God is, in truth, though not perfectly, a certain foretaste of everlasting life. . . . It is not incredible that it should be so when we believe, as we do believe, that this touch is most substantial, and that the substance of God *touches* the substance of the soul. Many saints have experienced it in this life. The sweetness of delight which this touch occasions baffles all description. . . . The proper way to speak of them is for him who has been favoured with them . . . to be silent."[4]

" When the soul has this experience," declares *Blessed Angela of Foligno*, " it feels that the infinite God is *blended* with it and keeps it company."[5] " One day," she adds, " my soul was rapt, and *I saw God* in a brightness above all known brightness, in a fulness above all fulness. . . . Then *I saw God* in a darkness, and of necessity in a darkness, because he is situated too far above the mind, and all that can become the object of a thought is without proportion to him . . . and nothing in him can become the object of a word or of a concept. I saw nought, I saw everything. The more profound the darkness is, the more does the good surpass everything: it is the mystery which is held back. . . . This is the supreme attraction beside which all is nought, this is the incomparable."[6]

[1] *Interior Castle*, 5th M., ch. i.
[2] *Canticle on Ecstasy*.
[3] *Living Flame*, str. 2, v. 3.
[4] *Living Flame*, str. 2, v. 4.
[5] *Life*, ch. lii.
[6] *Book of Visions*, ch. xxvi.

According to the *Venerable Blosius*, "the *submerged* soul is absorbed in God, *swims* this way and that in the divinity and experiences an ineffable joy. . . . In this exile, it begins eternal life."[1]

According to the testimony of *St Alphonsus Liguori*, these graces consist in confused and general knowledge, in *divine touches* which unite the soul to God.[2]

St Alphonsus Rodriguez is careful to observe that the spiritual touch is not an imagination: "This sensation of the presence of God," he states, "is not obtained by way of imagination, but there is in it a true certitude received from on high. It is a spiritual and experimental certainty that God is in the soul and in every place."[3]

St Francis de Sales renders the same testimony: "The soul that is in quiet before God," he says, "insensibly draws in the sweetness of this presence without reasoning. . . . It possesses such a sweet vision of its Spouse present that discourse would be of no use. . . . The soul has no need of *memory* in this repose, because its Love is present. Nor has it any need of the *imagination*, for what need is there to represent by image, either interior or exterior, him in whose presence it rejoices? O eternal God! when by thy sweet presence thou dost cast sweet-smelling perfume into our hearts . . . the will, as with spiritual fragrance, remains engaged in *feeling*, without perceiving it, the incomparable good of having God present."[4]

However, it is not only an obscure contact, but one that is sweet, extending at times to *caresses*, to the *clasp* and *embrace* of the divine Spouse, which our mystic saints have experienced and described; it is even occasionally a *vision*, more or less luminous, either of the presence or of the nature of God—at least in the visions which accompany higher degrees of contemplation.

Let *St Teresa* here speak for herself: in the vision of the Blessed Trinity, she says, "I see *clearly* that the Persons are distinct, as I saw it yesterday when you, my father, were talking to the Father Provincial; only I saw nothing, and heard nothing, as, my father, I have already told you. But there is a strange certainty about it, though the eyes of the soul (the imagination) see nothing; and when the presence is withdrawn, that with-

[1] *Spiritual Instruction*, ch. xii, par. 4.
[2] *Homo apost., Append.* 1, n. 23. [3] *Life*, n. 40.
[4] *Treatise of the Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. ix.

drawal is felt. . . . Though the Persons are distinct in a strange way, the soul *knows* one only God."[1]

The Saint often comes back to this vision, which enables her to see how the Persons of the Blessed Trinity are united and distinct in the infinite essence: " I seem to understand the mystery, and a great joy it is."[2]

Many other mystics have had analogous visions and have stated clearly to their confessors, who enquired on this point, *the way* they took place. Here is the testimony of the *Venerable Luis de Ponte :* " She (the Venerable Maria d'Escobar) told me that she had clearly seen the divine essence and the face of God, one in three Persons, also the blessedness of the saints, and the manner of it. I asked her of what light she spoke; was it that of the blessed which St Paul had, as we read, in rapture ? Or is it a kind of inferior, though yet considerable, enlightenment, such as it is possible to experience in our mortal life ? And this is what she answered me in writing: ' The light which my soul received in order to know these mysteries, was as great as is possible in this life; but a knowledge characterized by *extreme clearness and distinctness*. I know with certainty that I see exactly *the same object* as the dwellers in the heavenly Jerusalem, but the revelation did not tell me if with the same force and in the same way. However, here is one fact: it came to pass that I saw the interior *blessedness* of several saints and *how it was produced by God*. Now I compared this with what I experience when the divine Majesty manifests to me the greatness of his essence, and it seemed to me that these different manifestations were absolutely identical.' "[3]

Let us add another testimony, that of *St Alphonsus Rodriguez :* " Father Alphonsus answered me that once he was transported in rapture, to which heaven he does not know, but he remembers, and can never forget, that he saw the *divine essence*. This vision took place with certain limitations which he was only able to explain by means of the following comparison: the divine essence would be, so to speak, hidden by two veils (transparent) which needed to be withdrawn in order that it might be seen. He saw it only imperfectly, because but one veil was removed; but those that are in glory and are of the blessed see it without the veils and therefore perfectly.[4]

The experience of other holy persons proves to us that in these visions God reveals not only the Trinity of his Persons in

[1] *First Letter to Fr. Rodrigo Alvarez.* [2] *Life*, ch. xxxix.
[3] *Works*, vol. i, bk. iii, ch. ii, par. 4. [4] *Life*, appendix after no. 275.

the unity of his essence, but also his most sublime attributes, such as his simplicity, his greatness, his wisdom, his power, his immensity, his justice, his mercy, his truth, his goodness, his beauty, and above all his infinite perfection. This last vision, the most general, an obscure, or rather negative, synthesis of all the divine attributes, is even that which, according to St Bernard and St Thomas, is most commonly vouchsafed to contemplatives.

And it should be well noted that these lofty visions are granted both to ignorant souls, incapable of such inventions, and to the learned, yet without the aid of their knowledge. *Dionysius the Mystic* insists on this important point. " It is a most divine knowledge of God," he says, " which is obtained by ignorance, by means of a union that is superior to the intelligence, when the mind, being freed from all created things—nay more, being stripped of itself—is united to the brightness which radiates on high, and there, plunged in its splendours, is enlightened by the inscrutable depth of Wisdom."[1]

St Thomas experienced the same phenomenon: " It is not by knowledge, but by ignorance, with the aid of a certain supernatural union with divine things, that the contemplative knows God . . ., and in this state of knowledge he is directly illumined by the very depths of the divine and inscrutable Wisdom."[2] And so the holy Doctor does not hesitate to conclude: " Yes, even in this life, when the eye of the soul has been purified by the gift of understanding, God can be seen after a certain fashion ": *In hac etiam vita, purgato oculo per donum intellectus*, Deus quodammodo videri potest.[3]

Blessed Albert the Great proclaims the same experience: " Mystical knowledge," says he, " proceeds not from the data of reason, but from a certain divine light. The object which is laid hold of by the soul (God himself) acts so powerfully upon the understanding that the soul wills to be united thereto at all costs. This object, being above the scope of the understanding, is not clearly known thereby, and so the understanding rests on something indeterminate."[4] This is the great transluminous darkness so often described by all contemplatives.

[1] *De div. nomin.*, ch. vii, par. 3.

[2] *In div. nomin.*, ch. vii, 1, 4. *Cognoscimus Deum per ignorantiam, per quandam unitionem ad divina " supra naturam mentis " . . . et sic cognoscens Deum in tali statu cognitionis illuminatur ab ipsa profunditate divinae Sapientiae quam perscrutari non possumus* (*In libro de divin. nomin.*, ch. vii, 1, 4).

[3] I-II, q. lxix, a. 2, ad 3.

[4] *In libr. de myst. theol. Dionys.*, proem. ad 1.

All these testimonies of the saints may be *summed up* in a few words. After having experienced the marvels of mystical union, the soul becomes possessed of a certitude, not reasoned and discursive, but intuitive and invincible, of the existence of God, of the Blessed Trinity, of our Lord, etc., whether the contemplative has been permitted a glimpse of them in some sublime vision, or has not been granted any vision properly so called, but only obscure touches.

In the first case, that of the vision—like St Paul—it is clear that the certitude is intuitive. In the second case, there is still intuition, if not of the nature and of the essence, at least of the presence of these divine objects. It is not effected through a luminous sight, but by a more obscure and mysterious spiritual sense, which has been compared by the saints to the touch of an unseen friend's hand in the dark.

" It was not by way of vision," says St Teresa; " I believe it was what is called mystical theology."[1] " But, you may ask," she adds, " how can a person who is incapable of sight and hearing see or know these things ? I do not say that she saw it at the time, but that she perceives it clearly afterwards, not by any vision but by a certitude which remains in the heart, which God alone could give. . . . If we did not see it, how can we feel so sure of it ? That I do not know."[2]

Nevertheless, in her second *Relation* to Father Alvarez, the idea of the saint becomes more defined, and she replies very clearly: " The soul seems to have other senses within itself then, which bear some likeness to the exterior senses it possesses." The necessity, in mystical contemplation, for special spiritual senses of graduated clearness of perception, could not be more clearly affirmed (see below, *Second Section*, ch. x).

Such are the numerous testimonies of saints canonized by the Church as to their mystical experiences. It remains for us to submit them to the judgement and appreciation of the great theologians.

The greater number of mystical theologians accept them, however astonishing they may seem, as undeniable facts, without dispute. Let us cite, for example, *Alvarez de Paz :* " Aided and strengthened, the mind *sees* God. It does not happen by *denying* or *affirming* anything concerning him . . ., but by *gazing* on the divine grandeur, without admixture, in the tran-

[1] *Life*, ch. x. [2] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. i.

quillity of serene light. . . . It is certain, reader, when thou seest light with the eyes of the body, this does not happen through association of ideas. . . . In all simplicity thou *seest* the light. In the same way the soul, in this stage of contemplation, affirms nothing, denies nothing, attributes nothing, discards nothing, but in a complete repose it *sees* God. One may say: it is astonishing, or rather incredible. . . . I admit it is astonishing, nevertheless the fact is certain."[1]

Thus in contemplation there is neither perception of the senses, nor projection of the imagination, nor discursive knowledge by more or less rapid induction, nor an intellectual grasp of the abstract in the concrete, *in phantasmate*, but direct intellectual intuition of a transcendental reality, the likeness of which we do not possess in our ordinary experience.

Is this a contradictory or impossible conception ?

It is clear that such facts must be *disconcerting* to the reason of the philosopher. A direct union between a faculty and its object requires that a certain proportion should exist between them. Yet none such exists between the finite and the infinite, between the created and the uncreated. The ontology of certain philosophers is chimerical. But such facts only demonstrate the existence of a supernatural order and of a grace which transforms our natural faculties or renders them divine, which is in no way a radical impossibility.

The theologian in turn is also somewhat disconcerted by it. How many texts there are in the Scriptures which teach us—at least in *normal circumstances*—that God is only known to us in the mirror of his creatures, and in a more or less enigmatical and obscure manner: *Per speculum et in aenigmate;*[2] *invisibilia enim Dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur;*[3] that God dwells in inaccessible light and cannot be seen by mere mortals: *Deus in-habitat lucem inaccessibilem quem nullus hominum vidit nec videre potest;*[4] *Deum nemo vidit unquam;*[5] indeed more, he who sees God cannot live: *non videbit me homo et vivet.*[6] And St Teresa thus gives us one of the chief reasons. The excess of joy that is felt in ecstasy, she says, really places life in danger.[7] But it is not only our heart of flesh that would be shattered in these transports, all our senses would be crushed and our mind blinded by the contemplation of the divine Sun face to face. Thus reason and faith appear to unite in

[1] Alvarez de Paz, *De inquisitione pacis*, V, pt. iii, ch. xiv.
[2] 1 *Cor.* xiii 12. [3] *Rom.* i 20. [4] 1 *Tim.* vi 16.
[5] *Joan.* i 18. [6] *Exod.* xxxiii 20. [7] *Interior Castle*, 6th M., ch. xi.

rejecting all experimental knowledge of God as being impossible in this life.

A very special reason is given by St Thomas and the Thomist school, drawn from his teaching on the theory of intellectual knowledge. The human intellect, being closely bound to the senses, is not able to *perform its functions without sensible images*, for it is from these images, by means of abstraction, that it draws its ideas or intelligible species, without which it would not be able to understand. Whence the famous proposition, that there is no knowledge in this life without images: *Intellectus conjunctus corpori passibili non potest intelligere nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata*[1] (see Appendix V).

However grave may be these difficulties which have hindered some theologians and caused them to deny the very possibility of the direct apprehension of God in this mortal life, St Thomas will solve them with his customary ease by distinguishing between the many senses in which is used the expression " to see God."

First of all he distinguishes *three modes* by which it is possible to contemplate God: either in *his essence* without any psychological medium of impressed and expressed species,[2] or by the action of *impressed species infused* supernaturally in the mind, or again by the *reflection of created things* and in abstract concepts (*expressed species*), in which we contemplate the First Cause through its effects.

" But," he tells us, " the *first mode* of contemplating God, by his essence, is natural to God alone, who knows himself in this way; it is supernatural both for the angels and for man transfigured by the light of glory. It is the vision of the blessed, which man even in his first innocence did not enjoy. The *second mode*, intuition by infused impressed species, which is natural to the angels, is supernatural to man, who may be

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. lxxxiv, a. 7; q. lxxxv, a. 1; *In III De anima*, xii, etc. Let it be noted, however, that this does not refer to the essential powerlessness of the soul, which is spiritual; but to the fact that no purely immaterial object except itself is normally presented to it in this life. *Singulare non repugnat intelligi inquantum est singulare, sed inquantum est materiale; quia nihil intelligitur nisi immaterialiter. Et ideo si sit aliquod singulare et immateriale, sicut est intellectus, hoc non repugnat intelligi* (St Thomas, I, q. lxxxvi, a. 1, ad 3). Furthermore, in the other life, after separation from the body, intellection without image will be the habitual state.

[2] See the philosophical theory of *impressed* and *expressed* species, below, *Second Section*, Appendix IV.

raised thereto by grace, even after the fall, as is evident in the case of those to whom is vouchsafed the gift of contemplation and who are judged worthy that God should reveal himself to them: *Sicut in viris contemplativis patet, qui revelationem Dei merentur;* but man enjoyed it still more completely when in his first state of original justice. Finally, the *third mode* of knowing God is indirect, and common to all men on earth, even after the fall."[1]

The nature of this *third* state is understood by all our readers. It is a discursive knowledge of the First Cause recognized inductively in its effects, whether material or spiritual. It is, therefore, a knowledge *in phantasmate*, a discursive process, even though it be rapid and instinctive, as it was with our first parents, and it has nothing in common with the *simplex intuitus* of the mystic contemplatives.

The nature of the *first* state is no less clear: it is a direct or intuitive knowledge of God seen in himself, in his essence which, in the transforming light of glory, informs the souls of the blessed directly and, for them, takes the place of both impressed and expressed species.[2]

The *second* mode only requires explanation, as it has been often misunderstood. A number of philosophers, in fact, particularly of the Suarezian and Cartesian schools, have considered that these *impressed species* or divine touches, infused into the minds of the angels or of contemplative mystics, were intermediate images, or a kind of photographs, in which God was contemplated as in a mirror; but here

[1] *Videndum est quot modis Deus possit videri. . . . Uno modo per essentiam . . . alio modo per effectum aliquem ejus effluentem in intellectum videntis* (*speciem impressam*). . . . *Tertio modo per effectum aliquem extra intellectum videntis in quo divina similitudo resultat* (mirror of creatures). . . . *Ad primum modum visionis qui soli Deo ex conditione suae naturae debetur, elevatur angelus et homo per gloriam ; unde est illa visio beatorum, quam homo in primo statu non habuit. Ad secundum vero modum, qui est naturalis ipsi angelo, et supra naturam hominis, elevatur homo per gratiam, etiam post statum culpae, sicut etiam "in viris contemplativis" patet, qui revelationes divinas merentur, et multo amplius fuit in primo statu per gratiam originalis justitiae : tertius autem modus est communiter viatorum etiam post statum culpae* (*In II*, dist. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1). Cf. *De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, in which he repeats that here it is a question of knowing God by *impressed* species, *medium quo*, and in no way by images or intermediate ideas, *medium in quo*. *Cf.* I, q. lvi, a. 2, c.; a. 3, in which he again states that it is, indeed, through *impressed species* that the angels know God, before being admitted to the beatific vision.

[2] *In tali visione, divina essentia est et "quod" videtur et "quo" videtur* (St Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, III, ch. li.)

a grasp of the traditional teaching is totally lacking, of which most serious confusion is the outcome.

Doubtless, when an object is *absent*, in order to see it again we must express it by a mental representation (*expressed species*), which is a reflection or intermediate image; but when the object is *present*, there is no expressed species; in order that we may see it, it is enough that it make a normal impression (*species impressa*) on our senses. And St Thomas, following Aristotle, repeats a score of times, and with the utmost energy, that this impression or impressed species is certainly neither the object seen, *id quod*, nor the mirror in which the object is seen, *id in quo*, but only the means, *id quo*, by which we perceive the object directly. This means is the information directly conveyed to the subject feeling by the action of the object felt, which unites them together, *agent and patient*, in a common action.

In sensation, the object sensed is the *agent* which works on us; the impressed species is the *perception* or impression of its action which we receive, and which makes manifest to us the presence and existence of the agent, *by his very action*. The action and the perception, in fact, are only two different sides of one and the same act, considered from two different points of view; thus they are both grasped at the same time by the conscious subject.

And again, as direct knowledge precedes reflex knowledge, the attention is directed to the action of the agent before our perception. Thus, when I feel a sharp point, it is the *relief* which I perceive before the organic perception, which is like the *matrix*. Now this is an experimental intuition, immediate and in no wise discursive, to which St Thomas has boldly compared the intuition of God's presence in contemplation.

Just as this stone, he has gone so far as to say, is seen by the bodily eye, merely by the impression of light which it produces, so God's presence is apprehended by the spiritual eye of the contemplative, in the very depth of his consciousness, by the impression it causes there.[1] This comparison, taken from the second book of the *Sentences*, is repeated at other times by

[1] *Hujus exemplum in visione corporali inspici potest. . . . Lapis autem videtur ab oculo corporali per similitudinem suam (speciem impressam) in ipso oculo relictam, et huic comparatur secundus modus (videndi Deum) qui est per effectum relictum in intellectu videntis ; et hic quidem modus videndi (Deum) convenit angelo secundum conditionem naturae suae. . . . Ad hunc modum . . . elevatur homo per gratiam . . . sicut in viris contemplativis patet. . . .* (*In II*, dist. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1).— This text is decisive. St Thomas applies to the *sensation of the Divine* his general theory of sensation.

St Thomas, notably in *De Veritate*, q. xviii, a. 1, where we again read: *quasi species impressa rei visae.*

In this passage the holy Doctor insists on the *necessity* of these impressed infused species for mystical or passive contemplation. It demands, he says, two means: firstly, the *light* of divine grace which raises up the faculty of knowledge and allows of its fathoming more deeply, with considerable labour, what it already knew: secondly, the *impressed infused species*, which, without any labour, cause it to make new discoveries, such as the fact of the presence of God in our soul. And so he calls this contemplation an interior *revelation* or *inspiration*. Speaking of the first contemplative, he says expressly: *Indigebat* (*Adam*) duplici medio, *scilicet, medio quod est similitudo Dei* (species impressa) *et quod est elevans vel dirigens mentem* (lumen). . . . *Indigebat medio quod est* species *rei visae, quia per aliquid spirituale* lumen *menti hominis infusum divinitus . . . Deum videbat.* To behold the presence of God, the *light*, in fact, is not enough; there needs also the *impression* of this divine presence on our consciousness.

To sum up this teaching.—In contemplation, God, the supernatural *agent*, is immediately perceived *in his action received* by the soul (*species impressa*) as the material agent is directly perceived in his action received by the outward senses, and *in the measure that the agent is made manifest by such and such action.* This is of the first importance.

Thus, for example, God's action can make manifest to us his presence without his essence, or rather the *negative* side of that essence, without its *positive* aspect. St Thomas even insists on this twofold possible vision of the divine essence: the one reserved for heaven, where we shall behold *that which is;* the other, common to all contemplatives, who perceive rather *that which is not*, and how the divine Being is infinitely above all created being. This obscure but transparent contemplation is the ineffable mystery of the *Great Darkness*, celebrated by all the mystics. It is a pure intuition of the divine action which in no wise resembles our philosophical reasonings by negation.[1]

[1] *Duplex est* (*essentia*) *Dei visio. Una quidem* perfecta, *per quam videtur Dei essentia. Alia vero* imperfecta, *per quam etsi non videamus de Deo* quid est, *videmus tamen* quid non est; *et tanto in hac vita Deum perfectius cognoscimus, quanto magis intelligimus eum excedere quidquid intellectu comprehenditur. Et utraque Dei visio pertinet ad donum Intellectus. Prima quidem ad donum Intellectus consummatum, secundum quod erit in patria; secunda vero ad donum Intellectus inchoatum, secundum quod habetur in via* (II-II, q. viii, a. 7).

This *second mode* of knowledge of God, therefore, is truly *intuitive*, like the first, although they differ essentially. By the first, the beatific vision, the human intellect is informed by the very *essence* of God; the second by his *created action* only, his essence remaining unknown. The first produces a synthetic intuition, far more perfect in itself, but far less accessible to our feeble sight. God is then seen *all at once*, but very incompletely: *totus sed non totaliter*, as the theologians say. The second mode of knowledge, being analytical, is more accessible to us. In fact, the creative acts of God in us are manifold and successive, and manifest to us only little by little, and by fitting degrees, the great mystery.

To reply, as has been done, that this is impossible, because then we should no longer see God *as he is*, synthetically, but *as he is not*, analytically, is a puerile objection, which has not given pause to St Thomas or the highest geniuses of theology. It is only necessary to answer, with Aristotle, that neither abstraction nor analysis is a lie, Οὐδὲ γίνεται ψεῦδος χωριζόντων,[1] and that it is enough for us to know God *as he shows himself*, partially, in order to know him, in a certain sense, *as he is*, for he cannot lie.[2] Now, as St Thomas observes, such concepts are not false, but only imperfect. Being unable to represent the infinite essence wholly, they are nevertheless a small imitation of it: *Non potest forma per intellectum concepta repraesentare divinam essentiam complete, sed habet aliquam modicam imitationem ejus . . . nec tamen istae conceptiones sunt falsae, sed incompletae* (*De Verit.*, q. ii, a. 1, c).

To those who continue to deny that God has the power to communicate himself thus partially to men, because, not understanding the *why* of this ineffable manifestation, they think it impossible, we can only recall the words of the *Imitation* (IV, xviii, 1): "God is able to do infinitely more than we can understand"; or those of St Teresa: "God desires that no limits should be set to his work" (*Castle*, 1st M., ch. 1).

The two former modes of contemplating God, therefore, are both intuitive and without reasoning, and obtain for us a truly experimental knowledge. But the first, we repeat, is reserved to the blessed in celestial glory, whereas the second, according to St Thomas, is a gift natural to the *angels*, who do

[1] Aristotle, *Phys.*, l. II, ch. ii, art. 3.

[2] In the language of the schoolmen the expression *sicuti est* has a special meaning, which we do not use here; it signifies *beatific vision*, whereas we are speaking only of a *true* manifestation.

not reason, and at the same time a supernatural one of contemplative mystics, who in this *follow after* the angels, as the holy Doctor tells us, and emulate the pure spirits: *Homo in quantum est contemplativus est aliquid* supra hominem, *quia in visione simplici intellectus* continuatur *homo superioribus substantiis quae intelligentiae vel angeli dicuntur*[1]—*Et ideo dicitur sicut alter Angelus.*[2]

In the same passage the holy Doctor adds that the contemplative life, like that of the angels, tends only to the sole vision of the first principle, which is God: *Contemplativa vita ad solum videndum principium anhelat, scilicet Deum.* Whence he at once *concludes*: " The word contemplation in its strict sense signifies this principal act by which God is contemplated in himself ": *Unde nomen contemplationis significat illum actum principalem quo quis Deum " in se ipso " contemplatur.*[3] And he adds, in the question which follows, that God is the object *par excellence* of the contemplative life: *Vita contemplativa consistit principaliter in optimo contemplabili.*[4] Begun by the mystical saints on earth, it will be fully achieved in heaven.

It must not be concluded, because intuition of God by infused species is a gift proper to contemplative souls, that they have lost the faculty, common to all, of perceiving him indirectly in his effects, *in effectibus* or *in phantasmate.* Far from that. The blending of acts so different is a very frequent fact in the lives of the mystics.[5] St Teresa even advises the most perfect to return from time to time to the spiritual exercises of common life.[6] But this fact has been the means of deceiving quite a number of exegetes, who, in reading in the lives of the mystical saints that they themselves also contemplated the First Cause in his effects, conclude from this, quite wrongly, that they were not able to contemplate otherwise.

[1] *In III*, dist. xxxv, q. i, a. 2.
[2] St Thomas, *De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 12
[3] *In III*, dist. xxxv, *ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*, q. iii.
[5] " When, for one instant, rapid as lightning, something most divine has lightened the enraptured soul, immediately, either in order to moderate this excessive brightness, or to enable us to render an account of it to others, there appear, I know not how, certain imaginative figures of inferior things, proportionate to the knowledge which God bestows on us " (St Bernard, *Sermo* 41 *in Cant.*, n. 3).
[6] " There is no soul so great a giant on this road but has frequent need to turn back and be again an infant at the breast " (*Life*, ch. xiii).

The *third* way remaining always open to mystics, is the *first* entirely closed to them? Are they never able to contemplate God *in his essence*, in the same way as the blessed?

This new question, much the most thorny, has been the subject of very lively controversy among the most eminent Doctors of the Church. If it were a question of the *beatific vision* properly so called—that is to say, the *clear and habitual* vision of the divine essence—there would be no doubt as to the reply. It is the constant teaching of the Church, and is even *de fide*, that, saving our Lord Jesus Christ, the God-Man, this has been vouchsafed to no man in this world.[1] It cannot, therefore, be classed amongst the degrees of contemplation or mystical prayer, although it is the end of all Christian life, for grace and glory do not differ essentially, glory being but the ultimate expansion of grace.

The only question which concerns us here is that of a *vision inferior* to that of the blessed, either a vision more or less clear but neither comprehensive nor habitual, or else a vision more or less obscure and passing.

It is objected that it is impossible because it is contrary to the nature of our human intelligence, whilst it is united to a body, to know without sensible images, and that such a direct vision of the divine essence would be no longer an intellection *in phantasmate* or by abstraction of the intelligible in the sensible, as its nature requires.

" To this must be answered," says St Thomas, " that in the rapture (of St Paul) which is here in question, the divine virtue raises man by making him pass from that which is conformable to his nature to that which is superior thereto. This is why there must be distinguished two things: first, that which is natural to man; secondly, that which the divine virtue produces in him which is superior to his nature. For, inasmuch as the soul is united to its body as its natural form, the habit which naturally befits it is to apprehend by means of images. In rapture the divine virtue does not destroy this habit in the soul . . . but only suspends the act which would turn it towards images and sensible things, and would thus prevent it from being raised up towards that which surpasses every form of imagina-

[1] *De communi lege et potentia, non conceditur hominibus mortalibus " clara " visio essentiae Dei* (Suarez, *De Deo*, II, c. xxx, n. 3). *Cf.* St Thomas, I, q. xii, a. 11; and II-II, q. clxxx, a. 5. Benedict XIV, *De servor. Dei beatif.*, III, c. i, n. 5. Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. iv, a. 4.

tion. Thus, in rapture, it is not at all necessary that the soul should be separated from the body, but it is necessary that its intellect should be abstracted from images and sensible things." The holy Doctor concludes: " It is impossible for man, in the state of this present life, to see God in *his essence, at least unless he be detached from the senses.*"[1]

And he repeats the same conclusion elsewhere: in order that the soul may see the divine essence, it is necessary that it should be entirely freed from the senses, either by death, or by some rapture: *Unde oportet mentem quae divinam substantiam videt, totaliter a corporalibus sensibus esse absolutam, vel per mortem, vel per aliquem raptum.*[2]

This direct vision of the divine essence, then, according to St Thomas, is possible, although it is contrary to the present state of human nature, not only fallen nature, but also that nature such as it left the hands of the Creator in its first state of innocence and sanctifying grace. The holy Doctor lays special stress on this fact in another passage.[3] " Although the first man," he says, " had a more perfect knowledge of God when in a state of innocence than we have now, he did not see God (habitually) in his essence: otherwise he would not have sinned . . . he could only have seen him thus (accidentally) in rapture, as when God sent Adam that sleep spoken of in Genesis."[4]

There is here, then, only an accidental fact, a remarkable and assuredly very rare favour. It is a real miracle, since it removes the contemplative from the habitual order of grace, though without making him lose the *habitus* of faith.

As this vision always remains *relatively obscure*, there is always room while on this earth for the exercise of the virtues of faith and hope, which will be without an object in heaven; and therefore the seers always remain during this mortal life in their essential condition of wayfarers, without ever equalling the blessed.

Whence the martyrdom of that semi-transparent faith of which St John of the Cross complains. " The soul . . . [has]

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. clxxv, a. 4 and 5. See the greatly developed commentary on St Thomas in Billuart, *De Deo*, diss. iv, a. 4, which energetically upholds the possibility and the fact of the vision of the essence of God. *Id fieri potest absolute, imo et factum fuisse infra demonstrabimus.*

[2] *Cont. Gent.*, III, c. xlvii. [3] I, q. xciv, a. 1. [4] *Ibid.*

its faith so clear as to trace most distinctly certain divine glimpses of the majesty of God. . . . It is incredible how vehement are the longings and sufferings of the soul when it sees itself on the point of testing this good, and at the same time sees it withheld; for the nearer the object desired, the greater the pangs of its denial."[1]

It is this martyrdom which is expressed by St Teresa in an immortal canticle:

> I live, but yet I live not in myself,
> For since aspiring to a life more high
> I ever die because I do not die.[2]

Faith, then, even when transparent, always remains faith, and this is an answer to a grave difficulty felt by certain theologians. It is here set forth with perfect clearness by that master of mystical theology, Cardinal Bona.

" Contemplation (in its higher degrees)," he says, " is a sweet, calm and lovable vision of the eternal Truth, which the mind perceives by a pure glance, without multiplicity of reasonings, and which it penetrates with a great love and equally great admiration, with so much certitude and clearness that it is raised to the *face-to-face intuition* of God; not, however, to the extent of the glory of the blessed, but in a lesser light, still obscure and based on faith, in which it finds its perfection and great enlightenments."[3]

Furthermore, as has already been explained, sight is not the only spiritual sense by which we are able to attain to God directly. There is also a certain contact by touch, which apprehends the presence of the divine Being without sight. And between these two extremes of vision, more or less luminous, and touch, more or less obscure, are found the whole gradation of the other spiritual senses. All these senses, however, have this privilege, that they can apprehend their object directly, experimentally and without intermediate images, or, as expressed in philosophical language, without the mirror of *expressed species*, yet through a relative obscurity, which leaves room for faith.

There is nothing, then, opposed to the fact of the vision of the divine essence being granted on earth, by exception and in very rare cases, to privileged saints, at least when they are in the ecstatic state and have completely lost the use of their corporal senses.

[1] *Cant. Spirit.*, str. 12.
[2] *Vivo sin vivir en mi.*
[3] *Via compendii ad Deum*, c. ix, n. 4.

This opinion of the angelic Doctor appears to us to be firmly founded, although it is contrary to that of St Ambrose[1] and of St Cyril,[2] who still require impressed species, infused by God into the mind of the seer. On the other hand, it has the authority of St Augustine[3] and of St Basil;[4] it is, above all, it seems to us, more in conformity with the formal testimony of the great saints who have experienced it. But may we go still further and transform this exception into a general rule?

Père Lahousse[5] and some other rare theologians have held that as the intuition of the mystical saints is able at times to take place *without impressed species*, these would seem always unnecessary. But here, as we believe, there is a misunderstanding. If they merely wish to say that these species are not able to act the part of images or of intermediate ideas, we are altogether with them. But such is not the sense attributed to them by St Thomas, and this is how he justifies it.

In order to have direct knowledge it is necessary that the object known must be received into the subject knowing. But, he says, God can only be present in the human mind in two ways: either *as an habitual form*, as an attribute in its subject—such is the case with the blessed, plunged in the light of glory—or else as a transitory *impression* which makes manifest the action and the agent—in the same way that the light of the sun is in the air or in the eye which beholds it. Now it is this *impression* (action received) which we call *divine touch* or *impressed species*. It is necessary, either to hold the attention of the seer, or to limit his field of vision, *in the same way* as a division and a partial manifestation of the divine Being. Thus the prophetic

[1] *De fide*, l. v, *cap. ultim.*

[2] L. 1 *in Joan.*, c. xxii, and l. 4, c. vi.

[3] *Ep.* CXII, c. xii and xiii; and *Supra Gen.*, XII, c. xxvii.

[4] *Exam. homil.* I.

[5] "The reason which prevents the admission of intelligible species for the beatific vision, must also exclude them from the mystical vision, because both attain to God himself, experimentally. . . . May it not then be admitted that the ecstatic, in order to see God, receives also (as do the elect) a supernatural power which lifts up the force of the mind and renders it capable of fixing its gaze on the divinity?" (Lahousse, *Revue apologétique*, July 16, 1906). *Cf.* Philip of the Holy Trinity, *Sum. theol. myst.*, p. III, tr. i, disc. ii, art. 1; Antony of the Holy Spirit, *Cursus theol. mystico-scholasticae*, tr. iii, no. 61. These theologians only admit a difference of degree or intensity, and not of nature, between the mystical and the beatific visions. Their opinion, although commonly rejected, has never been condemned by the Church (see *Second Section*, ch. xi).

vision is an *impression* which manifests only certain secrets of the divinity.[1]

If, however, these species can in no way act the part of a mirror or of intermediate images, in the sensation of the divine, they may, nevertheless, be compared to *transparent veils* which diminish the brightness of the divine light and obscure its direct vision.

St Alphonsus Rodriguez has already told us that the divine essence appeared to his eyes as through one or more transparent gauzes, whilst the blessed contemplated it without any veil. St John of the Cross several times used the same comparison: " It is as if God drew back some of the many veils and coverings that are before it, so that it might see what he is; then indeed—but still dimly, because all the veils are not drawn back, that of faith remaining—the divine face full of grace bursts through and shines."[2] And St Teresa has constructed the whole of her *Castle of the Soul* on this idea, that the divine Sun dwells in the centre, and that the concentric dwellings placed all round are separated therefrom by divisions of transparent crystal, becoming thicker and more numerous as the distance from the centre to the circumference is increased. So that the warm light, more clearly seen in the mansions nearest to the centre, becomes more obscure in the furthest ones, and thus it seems less seen than felt by a spiritual touch. The sensation of it remains none the less direct, revealing the presence of a reality.

Thus understood, the impressed species, infused by a special action of God, are free from the objections laid to their charge, and with St Thomas we willingly admit them, whilst we reject all *expressed* species or abstract intermediate idea, which—whatever the Suarezian school may say—by rendering it indirect and as in a mirror, mars the direct and experimental vision of which all the mystical saints constantly speak.

Still less do we accept—as several moderns propose we should—the displacing of the *intuition* of the very presence of God by the consciousness of an intense emotion or *affective*

[1] *Aliquid recipitur in aliquo dupliciter: uno modo ut forma (permanens) in subjecto consistens; alio modo per modum " passionis " (transeuntis) (sicut lux in aere). . . . Unde oportet quod prophetia sit in anima per modum cujusdam passionis, ut lumen in aere. . . . Sancti de prophetia loquentes, de ea per modum passionis loquuntur, dicentes eam inspirationem vel " tactum " quemdam, quo Spiritus sanctus dicitur tangere cor prophetae* (*De Verit.*, q. xii, a. 1).

[2] St John of the Cross, *Living Flame*, str. 4, verse 1.

state, whence the mystics *assume* this presence without seeing it.

" In that which you call an experimental knowledge," writes one of them, " I shall show you an affective state: that it is which produces the feeling of presence; it is in the sweetness of his love that the mystic knows God and possesses him. . . . The step may be so short, both for reason and faith, from the effect perceived to the cause, that, in this experience of God present in his effects, the mystic abridges and interprets."[1]

Does this theory suffice to explain *all* the experiences of our saints and to safeguard the experimental knowledge of which they speak unceasingly ? We do not think so, because it is possible to experience this same " sweetness of love " for someone that is absent; and also because to *think* of a person that is loved and to *feel* this same person near, to the extent of being able to see, touch, and grasp him, are experiences so opposed that psychologists of penetration such as St Teresa could not possibly confound them.

Now let us turn once more to the innumerable testimonies of this saint. For example, the following taken at random:

" [In ecstasy] the soul is represented as being close to God; and there abides a conviction thereof so certain and strong, that it cannot possibly help believing so. . . . It seemed to me, as it were, evident that I *felt* there his very presence . . . as I am saying, he seemed to me to be present himself."[2]

In the presence of this definite testimony and of a thousand others similar, from all our mystical saints, the writer quoted begins himself to doubt whether he has loyally explained the perception which they claimed to be *experimental*, for he prefers to call it " *quasi-experimental*."

But our unbelieving opponents do not feel themselves bound to such reserve and—more logically—treat it as pure illusion.

In fact, if our mystics *assume* the presence of God from an affective or *subjective* state, without seeing him, it is no longer an observation, but an interpretation on their part; they are no longer witnesses but reasoners. They may then have deceived themselves, and their statements have no longer the same weight.

Furthermore, all our rationalists are quick to make their escape through this cleft. They insist on confounding all

[1] Pacheu, *L'Expérience mystique et l'activité subconsciente*, pp. 110, 112. *Cf.* Maréchal, *A propos du sentiment de presence chez les mystiques*.

[2] *Life*, ch. xviii.

mystical states with " purely affective states," thus eliminating all *objective* intuition, the evidently supernatural character of which would embarrass them.[1]

In order to avoid these unlawful conclusions—for we have no right to correct and destroy the testimony of the mystics, by transferring to the domain of interpretations that which they guarantee to us to be the direct result of their observations—we have no hesitation in siding with the opinion of St Thomas, that of direct apprehension, without intermediate images. The sensation of the presence of a reality transcendent and divine is a sensation truly *intuitive* and not purely *emotive* (*Second Section*, ch. xiii).

To summarize this teaching in a few words, the intuition of the divine Being, in his most exalted mode, by his essence itself, without any *impressed* or *expressed* species, yet inferior to the beatific vision, is the highest degree of mystical contemplation in this life, and is a kind of transition between heaven and earth. St Thomas declares it to be so,[2] and we are not ashamed of such a master.

But if, on account of its rarity, it must be admitted, according to the more common opinion, that it does not belong to the regular series of mystical ascensions, the lower mode of intuition by *touches or impressed infused species* undoubtedly belongs thereto. In this the mystics, as the holy Doctor observes, are the successors and emulators of the holy Angels: the latter by a gift of nature, the former by a gift of grace.[3]

This intuition of the divine Being in his created action in the soul—either more or less luminous like a vision, but commonly more or less obscure like a touch in the darkness—is so essential to mystical contemplation, that St Thomas brings it into his *final definition : Unde nomen contemplationis*, he says,

[1] Thus Leuba, Ribot, Murisier, Godfernaux, Delacroix and the whole school of experimental psychologists. All subjectivists must think the same, for according to them the mind can directly compass only itself and its affective states.

[2] " *Supremus gradus* " *contemplationis* " *praesentis vitae* " *est qualem habuit Paulus in raptu, secundum quem fuit medio modo se habens inter statum praesentis vitae et futurae* (St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxx, a. 5, c. *Cf.* II-II, q. clxxv, a. 3). Ruysbroeck clearly adopts this view, as does Vallgornera.

[3] *Naturalis ipsi angelo, et supra naturam hominis . . . sicut in viris contemplativis patet* (*In II*, dist. xxiii, a. 1). *Homo in quantum est contemplativus . . . continuatur superibus substantiis quae intelligentiae vel angeli dicuntur* (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. i, a. 2).

significat illum actum principalem quo quis Deum in se ipso (*et non in effectibus*) *contemplatur*.[1]

Doubtless this intuition of God, which is reserved for pure hearts: *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*,[2] will only be realized in its fulness in eternity. Nevertheless, as the holy Doctor again remarks, the reward promised in this beatitude may begin to dawn in this life, in mystical contemplation.[3]

It consequently enters into the definition of mysticism, of which it is the culmination, and constitutes its specific difference from asceticism.

Also we may conclude in the words of Gerson: "The object of mystical theology is an experimental knowledge of God in the embrace of unitive love."[4] "There is no mystical state that is not (or does not pave the way towards) an experimental knowledge of God. This experimental knowledge is a simple and actual perception of God, proceeding from sanctifying grace, which begins here on earth and is completed in glory by consummated grace."[5]

Such is the teaching which appears to us to be the most authoritative, and most in conformity both with the intimate experiences of the saints and with the philosophical and theological theories of the greatest Doctors of the Church.

Can it be reproached with not being *traditional?* We think not. Like so many other theories, to-day recognized as certain, it has been evolved, little by little, from the facts experienced by privileged souls. The truth, at first more or less confused, has, especially since the time of St Teresa[6] and St John of the Cross,[7] whose penetrating psychological analyses have thrown so

[1] *In III*, dist. xxxv, q. i, a. 2. *Contemplatio divinorum* effectuum secundario *ad vitam contemplativam pertinet* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 4; q. clxxiv, a. 5).

[2] *Matth.* v 8.

[3] *Omnia quae in beatitudinibus ponuntur tanquam praemia, possunt esse vel ipsa beatitudo perfecta, et sic pertinent ad futuram vitam; vel aliqua inchoatio beatitudinis, et sic pertinent ad praesentem vitam . . . sicut est in viris perfectis. . . . In hac etiam vita, purgato oculo per donum intellectus, Deus quodammodo videri potest* (I-II, q. lxix, a. 2).

[4] *Mystical Theology*, no. 28. [5] *On the "Magnificat,"* tr. vii, ch. ii.

[6] "When [God] seemed to me to be so near, I thought it impossible. Not to believe that he was present was not in my power; for it seemed to me, as it were, evident that I felt there his very presence" (*Life*, ch. xviii).

[7] "This knowledge consists in a certain contact of the soul with the Divinity, and it is God himself who is then felt and tasted, though not manifestly and distinctly, as it will be in glory" (*Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. xxvi).

much light on the problem, become more precise and definitely formulated.

Even at a time when the sciences of asceticism and mysticism were not yet distinguished, these two ways by which grace operated were well known. It would be enough to take a glimpse at the innumerable quotations given by Père Poulain in the tenth edition of his *Graces of Interior Prayer* to become convinced of this, and to recognize the truly traditional character of this teaching.

It was proclaimed in masterly fashion by Benedict XIV (see below, *Second Section*, ch. ii and iii), and is currently taught in the theological chairs of our canonical faculties, notably at Paris, in the works which have been published there, such as *Nature et surnaturel*, by Père Bainvel, and in the great Dictionaries, whether that of Catholic theology by Abbés Vacant and Mangenot, or that of apologetics by Père Alès, in both of which important articles have been devoted to the subject. And recently the Carmelite Congress at Madrid has given it support.

Furthermore, *Études* does not hesitate to state: "The Catholic doctrine is well known: in the mystical union, which is a *direct* apprehension of God, he acts *without mediation* on the soul in order to communicate himself thereto, and it is God, *not an image of God, not an illusion of God*, which the soul perceives and apprehends."[1] Thus is *infused* contemplation distinguished from *acquired;* it is the experimental sensation of the divine.

We do not ignore the fact that there are certain pious and distinguished opponents of this thesis,[2] but we live in hope that misunderstandings will finally be dispelled, and that the unity between us which is so desirable will be brought about once more. Meanwhile, let us at least remain united not only by mutual tolerance but also by charity and sincere respect.

In this spirit of conciliation we have been, from the beginning of the controversy, quite ready to grant that there is an *intermediate* stage between infused or mystical contemplation, as above described, and ordinary or ascetic prayer. In the same way that in the visible universe the changes of nature are never abrupt (*Natura non facit saltum*), and that the lowest degrees of the

[1] Fr. Roure, S.J., *Études*, August 5, 1908, p. 371.

[2] A. Saudreau, *La vie d'union à Dieu* (1900); *L'État mystique* (1903; Eng. trans., *The Mystical State*, 1925); *Les Faits extraordinaires de la vie spirituelle* (1908); Lamballe, *Mystical Contemplation;* Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Perfection chr. et contemplation*, etc.

higher species (although remaining specifically distinct) are closely related to the highest degree of the lower species (*Supremi generis infima attingunt infimi suprema*),[1] so also is it in the supernatural order.

In this case it would be the highest degree of the *prayer of simplicity* which would border upon the lowest degree of the *prayer of quiet*.

But if it be granted that sometimes they are indiscernible to the eye of man, yet none the less the eye of God searches not only into appearances, but into things in themselves. But there will always be an essential difference:

1. Between knowledge through infused species and knowledge without infused species (see Appendix IV).

2. Between prayer in which there is a consciousness of the real presence of God and of his action within us (*experimental sensation of the divine*), and prayer in which this consciousness is wanting.

3. Between a contemplation which ends in the presence of a divine reality and one that ends only in its abstract idea or in its image.

4. Between a passive state in which " God does all," as St Teresa says, and that which is the fruit of our activity, of our own efforts aided by the ordinary help of grace.

Here we have four radical differences which are of kind, not of degree.

And yet we maintain that there are *intermediate* states of prayer. Since God's grace is infinite in richness and variety, it would indeed be foolish to want to shackle it by our scholastic classifications, narrow and incomplete as they so often are.

We may conceive, indeed—and experience has often proved it[2]—that God, without any new infused species or suspension of powers, or any new psychological procedure of human knowledge, is satisfied with raising active or acquired contemplation above the limits which it can reach with ordinary grace—that is, to an abundance of light and sweetness which seems to surpass the normal mode.

For example, by a mediate or immediate action on the soul, God would give greater brightness or depth to the concepts

[1] *Inferior natura in suo summo attingit ad aliquid infimum superioris naturae* (St Thomas, *De Veritate*, q. xv, a. 1, c).

[2] Fr. de Clorivière, S.J., has closely analysed these intermediate states in his *Traité de l'oraison*, dedicated to the Hermits of Mont-Valérien.

of faith already acquired, or by unexpected combinations gather them together to make new concepts spring from them. At the same time, his grace would be exercised on the heart under the form of consolations or aridities, fulness or emptiness, hitherto unknown. But this would be only a simple reinforcement of the concepts or psychological elements God already finds in a soul, without the introduction of any entirely new element.

Such a contemplation, then, would be partly infused and partly acquired, and the rest in God which would result from it has already been given the name of *active quiet* or quasi-quiet, for it would not entail any real suspension of the ordinary working of the powers.

The observation of these two kinds of contemplation, completely or incompletely passive or infused, active or acquired, in souls—according to the just remark of Fr. de Guibert[1]—would indeed seem to account for the *twofold tendency* which we meet with in tradition and among contemporary mystical writers. Some go straight to the most developed forms of contemplation, because they seem the most noteworthy and typical, although the rarer: others, on the other hand, are more struck with the weaker states, because they are the more frequent, and tend to include in these lower forms the whole of the mystical state, and to relegate the higher forms of contemplation, if not to the miraculous, at least to the accidental and accessory.

Both, as the writer mentioned adds, make the great mistake of being too exclusive, of being willing to recognize only a single form of contemplation, while in fact there are several such, and notably intermediate forms between the two classical types of infused and acquired contemplation. The *bridge* between asceticism and mysticism would thus be found, and this "bridge" would thus be the connecting link between rival opinions.

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange seems indeed to have ended by agreeing with this view, when he calls the contemplation which we have described and defined *supereminent*,[2] though we maintain, with Mgr. Waffelaert[3] and the whole of tradition, for over three centuries at least, that it is infused contemplation, in the *strict sense*. It alone, indeed, can give us a true

[1] Cf. *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, Jan. 1924, p. 19.

[2] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection chr. et contemplation*, p. 384, *Appendices*, pp. 57, 92.

[3] *Revue d'ascét., et de myst.*, Jan. 1923, p. 31.

experimental sensation of the divine, because it alone allows of the supernatural infusion of touches or impressed species (it matters little whether they be clear or obscure), and because for every good Thomist philosopher there is no real sensation without impressed species, any more than there can be a triangle without an angle. Only the infusion of new lights, without impressed species, or of new sweetness, can indeed make " God sensible to the heart " by the effects which he produces there; but this subjective *feeling* differs *toto coelo* from the objective *sensation* of the divine.

However this may be, we hold to our position. Whether it be called *supereminent* or only *eminent in the strict sense*, infused contemplation does exist such as we have described and defined it; it is only a question of pure classification, but we dare not say a question of words, for the principles of direction are not the same in the passive and in the active ways.

After this digression, whose primary importance the reader will already have noted, we return to the analysis of the two essential elements of contemplation, *experimental knowledge* and *love ;* and after having so long studied the former, which is the more difficult to explain, let us pass to the second.

If, then, the object of mystical contemplation is thus special and proper to that contemplation, since it is God himself, must we add that the *love* which follows is likewise *of a species different* from all the other kinds of love met with in the ordinary ways of the Christian life ? Most assuredly, because there is a difference, not of intensity, but of quality, in the love of a thing, according to whether it is known or unknown directly, present or absent, according as to whether we are deprived of it or it is actually possessed.

Thus, for example, the love which a woman feels towards a fiancé whom she has never seen and who is absent, is very different from that which she experiences for one who is present to her eyes, or for the husband she already possesses. They are two states of soul dissimilar in quality, like the hope of a joy to come and the enjoyment of a happiness present or possessed. The love of a happiness already lived has a special delight.[1]

[1] " The experience of a happiness makes it far more beloved by us than all the knowledge of it we can possibly have " (St Francis de Sales, *Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. iv). " The faculties . . . are happy without knowing why: the soul . . . feels that it enjoys its Beloved, yet how it does so it cannot tell " (St Teresa, *Way*, ch. xxv).

This is why St Teresa, when she conducts us into that fourth Mansion of the prayer of quiet, which is the first stage in the mystical life, in which the intuitive sensation of the presence of God begins, warns us that the " spiritual tastes " which are experienced there are altogether different from the " spiritual contentments " granted in the preceding Mansions, in which the presence of God is not yet felt but only imagined.[1]

Mystical love also differs qualitatively by its origin from ascetic love. Far from being the result of our personal efforts seconded by the ordinary grace of God, it is God himself who draws it, so to speak, from his heart to imprint it on our own: whence its purity, delicacy, and special perfection. In a word, like all the mystical gifts, it is *passive:* a love that is *ready-made.*

It is on this account that all masters of the spiritual life constantly recommend the contemplative to avoid entangling with the divine impulses the labourings of reason and the no less laborious efforts of the heart. Even though he might thus succeed in producing more vigorous acts, he would disturb the sweeter peace and calm of the divine action and would spoil them.

St Teresa has very well pointed out this passive character of mystical love and its supernatural origin: " The longings, which I said I have, of loving and serving and seeing God," she writes to St Peter of Alcantara, " are not helped by any reflections, as formerly, when I thought I was very devout, and shed many tears; but they flow out of a certain fire and heat so excessive that, I repeat it, if God did not relieve them by throwing me into a trance, wherein the soul seems to find itself satisfied, I believe my life would come to an end at once."[2] And she adds besides that " this most sweet love of our God with the greatest suavity enters the soul, which feels happy and satisfied, *but cannot understand the reason nor how this great good entered it.*"[3]

This mystical sweetness, being infused, is a foretaste of eternal beatitude, as the intuitive knowledge by means of infused impressed species is, to a more or less imperfect degree, an imitation of angelic knowledge, and therefore a prelude to the beatific vision of heaven.

St Margaret Mary has made a similar observation on this state of passiveness: " This sovereign Spirit which operates and acts within me independently of myself," she wrote in her *Life.*

[1] *Castle,* 3rd M., ch. ii.
[2] *Relation to St Peter of Alcantara.*
[3] *Conceptions of the Love of God,* ch. iv, 2.

" took so absolute a command of my whole spiritual and even bodily being, that it was no longer in my power to stir up in my heart any other motion of joy or sadness than such as was pleasing to him, nor could my mind take hold of any other occupation than that which he had given it."[1]

Mystical contemplation, and therefore mystical science itself, is thus found to be perfectly determined by the formal object which the enraptured intelligence discovers therein, and in which the heart finds sweet delight. The ascetic way and the mystical way are not, then—as is sometimes heard said—the extension of one same ideal line; but are two ways, different and parallel, which meet each other only at infinity. And that is why, as Benedict XIV testifies, not only holy martyrs, but a large number of other saints have raised themselves to the highest sanctity without passing through extraordinary ways or sparkling with any mystical gift.[2]

§ 2 (Second Part)

Further objects of the infused prayer of contemplation

Nevertheless, the divine Being is not the only possible object of mystical contemplation. Inasmuch as, being the first and universal Cause, he comprises all that he has created, we may, to the extent that he permits, contemplate in him the sacred humanity of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, the holy Angels, the Church triumphant in heaven, the Church militant on earth, the Church suffering in purgatory, at every moment of their history, past, present, or future. For since all is in God, in him all may be seen, if such be his good pleasure.

First of all we may compass, with God and his attributes, the sacred *humanity of our Lord.* Certain false mystics, such as Molinos and the Beghards, have denied this. According to

[1] *Vie par elle-même*, p. 332.

[2] If Christian mysticism differs essentially from asceticism, at least in its object, which is the very *being* of God, and not merely the idea of God; all the more does it differ essentially from philosophical or natural mysticism. Thus we are surprised to find certain Catholics, even eminent ones, maintaining, with reserve it is true, that the ecstasy of the saints is natural in itself (*quoad se naturalem*), and only supernatural through the way they have reached it (*quod modum quo ad illam pervenerunt*), so that there would be one *same content* in the ecstasy of the saints and that of pagans! (P. de Munnynck, *Praelectiones de Dei existentia*, pp. 25-31). We prefer to leave such opinions, which are at least ambiguous, to German modernism.

them, to descend from the sublime heights of pure contemplation of the Divinity to his creature, in order to turn the attention to our Lord, his Passion, the Eucharist, was an imperfection and a lapse. "Contemplation is a purely spiritual work," said these *illuminati;* "everything which falls under the senses can only be an obstacle and hindrance." This plea, put forward and extolled by foolhardy directors, was specious, and St Teresa herself was for a moment almost convinced.[1] But she soon recognized and combated this fatal error, which later on was condemned by Innocent XI, in 1687. The reason for this is easy to see.

As stated by Dionysius the Mystic, from the time of the hypostatic union of the Word, man, in our Lord, is no longer separated from God, nor God from man: he is the God-man. More than this, far from being a deviation he is the way that leads to the Father: *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me.* It is therefore impossible for the soul, in its ascension towards God, to follow any other way.

In fact, when St Teresa entered into ecstasy, it was through the contemplation of the Passion of our Lord, and she endeavoured to induce her sisters to follow her example: If, whilst they were meditating on a mystery of the Life or Passion of our Lord, the divine Master made them enter into ecstasy, she exclaimed, so much the better, let them yield to him.[2]

This contemplation of our Lord—above all, of his sacred wounds, of his adorable Face, or of his divine Heart—appears to have been the most frequent occurrence in the lives of the holy ecstatics. We often come across it in St Bernard, St Francis of Assisi, St Antony of Padua, St Philip Neri, St Joseph of Cupertino, St Bridget, St Gertrude, St Catherine of Siena, and many others. St Elizabeth of Schönau thus saw displayed before her eyes not only the scenes of the Passion, but those of the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Epiphany, and the holy childhood of the Saviour.

In the second part of this study, under the subject of visions, we shall point out, moreover, that the sacrament of the Eucharist is the ordinary arena for the corporal manifestations of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, neither the sacred body of our Lord, nor his holy soul, so intimately united to the divinity, are antagonistic to mystical contemplation, and must not be separated therefrom.

[1] *Life*, ch. xxii.
[2] *Interior Castle*, 6th Mansion, ch. vii.

The same thesis will be found to be strongly maintained by St Augustine, St Leo, St Gregory the Great, St Bernard, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Blosius, St John of the Cross, Alvarez de Paz, Schram, Scaramelli, and the consensus of mystical writers. The only point of controversy between them is as to whether such contemplation of the sacred humanity of our Lord is for beginners and the imperfect. St Bonaventure seems to say this, but he must be interpreted to mean that it is the pure vision of the divinity that is withheld from beginners: it is the privilege of the most perfect, but not the exclusive and only object of their contemplation.

Nay, more, it is not only on this earth, but still more among the blessed in heaven, that we must eternally contemplate our Lord. " Their gaze," says St Thomas, " falls first of all on the divinity of Jesus Christ, but afterwards it rests on his humanity, and, in the contemplation of both, they find a delight which makes their beatitude."[1]

It would be equally an error to exclude the *Blessed Virgin Mary*, the saints and the blessed, from the number of secondary objects of contemplation. Innocent XI condemned this error as well as the former in the writings of Molinos.

The angels and the blessed are, in fact, the inseparable attendants on the King of glory, and are an admirable completion to the proper object of contemplation.

Finally, another vision, together with that of celestial glory, reserved for the contemplative, is that of grace—that is, as well as the Church triumphant in heaven, the Church militant on earth and the Church suffering in purgatory. For, indeed, these form *the mystical body* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, are the natural complement of the enlightenments of his contemplation.

The trials and struggles of the visible Church and the sufferings of purgatory as well as the splendours and beatitudes of heaven, are, indeed, a most powerful means of closely binding the soul with God in mystical union, and effectively contribute to the end of contemplation.

Supernatural illumination also sparkles on the *very soul* of the seer, in order to unveil to him his innate corruption and the marvels of divine grace in his regard, so that, prostrate in the depth of his wretchedness, he rises gladdened and transported to the highest outbursts of love and gratitude.

Such, to sum up, is the complete object of mystical con-

[1] *Quodlibet.*, VIII, q. xx.

templation: God himself and his attributes, our Lord Jesus Christ and his most holy Mother, the holy angels; finally, the mystical body of our divine Saviour—that is, his Church, triumphant, militant and suffering, and all that belongs to it. So that the object of contemplation is infinite, because it embraces God and all his works.

It remains to be asked whether there is not some *hierarchical order* among these objects in their gradual manifestation. Undoubtedly. And although God is in no way bound to follow any gradation in his favours, wisdom and reason alike tell us that he would proceed step by step in the ascent of souls towards himself. Generally the manifestation of the great truths of the Gospel, then that of the divine Master himself, precedes that of the Holy Trinity and the divine Essence, which may be considered as the apogee of the mystical ascension.

We do not say, however, the apogee of perfection. The contemplation of our Lord may suffice to lead souls to the most perfect union. It may be God's purpose for them to be occupied all their lives even with one single mystery alone, such as that of the Passion, the Eucharist, and the like, and to raise them thus to the summits of perfection, without having to favour them with the contemplation of his pure Essence. This last is a most rare gift, and one that he distributes according to his own unfathomable designs.

In the same way that there is an ascending scale among the different objects of contemplation, there are also *divers movements* in order to pass from one to the other. Following in the footsteps of Dionysius, certain scholastic writers have reduced them to three. If the soul moves round God alone, as around the central point with which it is enraptured, it is the *circular* movement; this is the most perfect. If from the consideration of creatures it passes to that of God, in whom it becomes transfixed, that is the *direct* movement. This is the most natural. Finally, if it descends again from the contemplation of God to that of his creatures, it is the *oblique* movement. This terminology is somewhat strange, but the key to it is indispensable for the reading of mystical writers.[1]

[1] Dionysius, *De div. nom.*, c. iv, par. 8 and 9 (*P.L.*, vol. iii, col. 703 *ff.*). *Cf.* St Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. clxxx, a. 6.

§ 3

Efficient causes of the infused prayer of contemplation

These efficient causes, as is admitted by all masters of the spiritual life, are God and man; as man without God can do nothing, and without man God cannot produce in us merit or demerit. The part of God in contemplation, however, is far greater than that which belongs to man; it is also of a very different nature, as we will show by a careful analysis.

Let us first examine the *part of man.*

It is manifest that, at least in a certain indirect way, man must lend his aid. If contemplation were only a *purely* passive phenomenon in all the elements composing it, if the soul produced no personal action corresponding with the divine action, it is clear that it could not merit, and would be but an irresponsible instrument in the hands of the Almighty. So that the highest act of the spiritual life and of sanctity would become an involuntary act, possessing no moral value; which is contradictory and inadmissible.

The act of contemplation, therefore, must needs be, in a way, voluntary, and, in fact, it can be so, *before*, *during*, and *after* the fulfilment of this act. Before, the soul can yield voluntarily to the call of the divine Spouse who desires to enrapture it. During the holy rapture itself, it perseveres in the consent already given, and the yielding of the will continues, if not in act (*in actu*), at least potentially. Finally, after the holy transports, the soul can rejoice and continue to take delight in its first consent.

What is more, the soul—at least in the greater number of cases—has been able to co-operate with the designs of God towards it, by the voluntary concurrence of a remote or proximate positive *preparation.*

(*a*) *Remote preparation.*—In the first place, purity of heart, by which is meant freedom from faults and imperfections intentionally committed. According to the formal teaching of Holy Writ, only those whose hearts are perfectly pure are admitted to the contemplation of God: *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.*[1] But so complete a purity of heart is not obtained without the habitual practice of the virtues; above all, of perfect charity and of active or habitual union with God, which is the ordinary forerunner of a more perfect and exalted passive union.

[1] *Matth.* v 8.

Finally, the solitude of the desert or of the cloister, or at least, that retreat and silence obtained by holy stratagem even in the midst of the world, is the usual condition, and the favoured spot, for the divine rendezvous. In order that God may make himself heard or show himself, he demands silence, calm, and relief from all outward turmoil. The sacred writings again and again repeat it: *Ducam eam in solitudinem et loquar ad cor ejus.*[1] *In silentio et quiete proficit anima devota.*[2]

(*b*) *Proximate preparation.*—The soul can also co-operate by *proximate* dispositions. It often happens that, during ordinary prayer, it finds itself suddenly raised to the higher level. The truth, discussed and elaborated by meditation, becomes suddenly so clothed with a supernatural radiancy of evidence, through the enlightenment of grace, that the soul suspends all discursive labour and lets itself be absorbed by a sense of admiration and love. In such a case, contemplation becomes the achievement of ordinary meditation, and this kind of contemplation is sometimes called *acquired* contemplation. But this is a verbal inaccuracy, for mystical contemplation strictly so-called is never the fruit of our own labour; it is never exchanged for our poor spiritual coin, however rich it may be considered.

We agree, however, that here the role of human activity is as high as it can be, for it leads the soul up to the gate where the new and higher world of contemplation is opened to it. But it is not the soul by its own merit which opens this gate. Once reached it is opened by the Spirit of God, who takes hold of the soul and makes it cross the threshold, and the role of that soul then becomes passive. It consists in being docile, in leaving God to act, in the contemplation of the new vision which he is about to unfold to its sight, enraptured with wonder. But this vision remains none the less essentially gratuitous, incapable of being acquired by the soul's merits, or of being in the least degree self-produced.

This is why, as has been said, there are most holy and virtuous souls who will never have the gift of contemplation, however great their merit and their sanctity, because they are not called to this extraordinary vocation. Why is this? "God alone knows," replies St Teresa.

Properly speaking, therefore, there is only one prayer which we are truly able to acquire by our own merits, which we may always endeavour to produce by our own effort with

[1] *Os.* ii 14. [2] *Imit.*

the assurance of succeeding, at least in a feeble measure; this is affective prayer in its highest degree, the prayer of simplicity.

Theologians have always placed in contradistinction with this prayer, or *acquired* contemplation, the *infused* prayer of contemplation, and we are now able to understand the true meaning of this expression.

Contemplation is called *infused* because it is a free gift from God and the soul is raised thereto without having made an effort to contribute towards it, otherwise than by the *positive* preparation of which we have spoken.

A *negative* preparation may even occasionally suffice, which contents itself with the avoidance of obstacles, the two chief of which are sin and inordinate attachment to creatures. "For wisdom," says the Scripture, "will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins."[1] And the author of the *Imitation* truly observes: "Therefore it is that so few are found who give themselves up to contemplation, because there are few who know how to become wholly detached from creatures and from perishable things."[2]

In exceptional cases—for we must not here set a limit to the power and merciful goodness of the Lord—even before a soul has given thought to the putting away of these obstacles of sin and attachment to creatures, the Spirit of God may forcibly invade it and, making up in an instant for the preparation that is lacking to it, suddenly raise it from sin or lukewarmness to the heavenly enlightenments of contemplation and the transports of love engendered thereby.

Saul, prostrate and confounded on the road to Damascus, is the classical instance of this. But such is not the habitual order of Providence, and its ordinary law will always be that of gradual and meritorious preparation.

Having thus considered the part of man in mystical contemplation, it will be more easy to show how infinitely higher and more important is the *part of God*, both in the call to contemplation and also in the act of contemplation itself.

(*a*) *In the vocation.*—It is God alone, as we have said, who calls a soul to this contemplation. Virtue, however heroic we may assume it to be, is never other than a negative condition, which gives neither the right nor the assurance of reaching

[1] *Sap.* i, 4. [2] *Imit.*, III, xxxi, 1.

this state. But there are some marks of this call, certain signs of vocation in some privileged souls, and St John of the Cross has reduced them to three principal indications which a good director should recognize.

The first is the recognition that the soul can no longer meditate or make use of the imagination to think of God, whilst able to use it freely with regard to profane things. This difficulty, however, or impotence of the mind to reason and to use the imagination, might come, not from an essential incapacity, but from the simple negligence of a soul which has contracted the unfortunate habit of allowing itself to fall into constant distractions during meditation. We must therefore supplement it with a second sign.

This consists in feeling no desire whatever, because of the lack of pleasure, to think of any other object than God. Nevertheless, as the same Saint remarks, this distaste for the things of this world might yet spring from a melancholy disposition or from entirely natural misanthropy. A third sign must therefore be added: it is the aptitude experienced for thinking of God, without multiplication of acts of the understanding, imagination, memory, or will, and for remaining in this act of loving attention to our Lord with great inward calm.

The united presence of these three signs is, according to St John of the Cross, decisive, and is evidence of the existence of a true vocation to the contemplative life.[1]

(*b*) Let us now pass on to the *actual act of contemplation*, which we have defined as an experimental knowledge or feeling of the divine. Here the soul's passiveness under the divine touch seems to absorb everything. But on a closer examination, and making a more complete psychological analysis of the feeling of the divine, we discover that its process passes through two successive phases, *as in the case of all other feelings*. The former, that of passivity properly so called under the action of God which lays hold of us, is *purely passive*, and in itself, *in se*, is nowise meritorious on our part: just as we have no merit in receiving a blow or in being lighted or warmed by another person, so we have no merit in being touched by God. It is not a vital *act* on our part, but a vital *passion*, and merit is only to be found in free acts, and not in passively received impressions. The second phase, on the other hand, is that of *vital reactions*. Firstly that of the intelligence, which sees and contemplates; but this vital act would not be free or

[1] *Ascent of Carmel*, bk. ii, ch. xiii.

meritorious without the consent of the will, which alone is able to be free and to merit, through its acts of acquiescence, complaisance, love, recognition, etc. . . . And so even the beatific vision of heaven, although it is a vital act, is yet neither free nor meritorious.

St Teresa and St John of the Cross have well explained this important distinction of the two phases. St Teresa, after speaking of active or acquired contemplation, adds: "With the assistance of God's grace we can help ourselves to a certain extent in these two matters: not so in contemplation (quiet); this is beyond our natural powers, and God does all, for it is his work."[1] "We can take no active part in this work. . . . [The soul] does no more than does the wax when impressed with the signet. . . . How good thou art, O God! All is done for us by thee, who dost but ask us to give our wills to thee that we may be plastic as wax in thy hands."[2]

And St John of the Cross: "To contemplate is to *receive*."[3] "The soul receives all these spiritual goods without producing from itself any acts other than its consent. . . ."[4] "God . . . communicates himself to the soul, thus passive, as the light of the sun to him whose eyes are open."[5]

So St Teresa loves to humiliate contemplative souls by this fundamental thought that their contemplation is wholly gratuitous, and without any merit on their part: their lights come from God and not from themselves. It is true that all merit comes from God, but in this case there is not even any merit to pay back to him, at least in this first phase of the sensation of the divine.

In the wake of these great mystics, *Bossuet* took this rigorous point of view of the psychology of sensation, when he wrote these words, so little understood in our day: "The mystic state consists principally (in its first phase) of something which God brings to pass in us, *without our own aid*, and in which consequently there neither is nor can be merit. . . ." And *St Alphonsus Liguori*, Doctor of the Church, who received the special approval of the Teresian Congress at Madrid, expressly professed the same doctrine in his *Homo Apostolicus*.[6] We will, in order to avoid all misunderstanding, sum it up in a word: since contemplation, in its proper and specific element, is not a *vital act* on our part, but a *vital passion*, it cannot be meri-

[1] *Way*, ch. xxv.
[2] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. ii.
[3] *Living Flame*, st. iii, v. 3.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. xv.
[6] *Append.*, i, 6.

torious, in itself, *in se*, but only in the free and vital operations which precede, accompany, or follow it.

The reader already perceives the profound reason of the astonishment, the violent opposition even, which this doctrine has met with at the hands of all those who have confounded infused with acquired contemplation, and have likened the *very special passivity* of the contemplative to the *ordinary passivity* of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In all the good actions which are produced under the ordinary inspiration of the Holy Spirit—*e.g.*, an act of faith—the act is wholly of God as First Cause, and wholly of man as secondary cause, and there is one only act, wherein it is impossible to distinguish two successive and chronologically distinct phases. In the sensation of the divine, on the other hand, there are two phases, or, if the expression be preferred, two actions of grace. The former is *operating in us and without our help*, *in nobis sine nobis*, and produces a *passive* involuntary *state* of which we are conscious. The second is *operating in us and with our aid*, and produces voluntary and meritorious vital reactions. In the former, *it is God who does all*, as St Teresa proclaims, and man, incapable of co-operating in a divine action which surpasses his powers, must be content with *leaving God to act*. Passivity under the mystic touch and non-mystical passivity, then, are not the same thing. In the latter case it is partial only; in the former total: it is a border-line case, like that of a circle relatively to a polygon inscribed within it, whose sides, if multiplied infinitely in number, draw continually closer to the circle without ever equalling it. These are two different kinds, we may say two different worlds. We thus put our finger on the first and fundamental confusion which refuses to distinguish between the two so greatly differing methods of action of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and by an exaggerated love of simplification reduces the passive ways of mysticism to the passive-active ways of asceticism. But this is an *a priori* view which does not withstand careful observation of the facts and loyal interpretation of the evidence.

Having set forth the part of God and that of man in the efficient causality of contemplation, have we to allow any part to *personal genius* and the *sublimity of the believer's faith?* Let us examine these two hypotheses.

The former, that of the rationalists, which sees in contemplation only a natural effect of the human mind, wholly

concentrated on a single idea, to the exclusion of all discursive reasoning and sometimes even of other powers of the soul, notably of outward feeling, as is seen in ecstasy, is neither a complete nor an adequate explanation of the facts observed.

It may well be granted, with St Thomas and Suarez, that the ligature of the reasoning faculties and other powers may be but the natural consequence of a lofty vision, producing astonishment and stupor—and we shall explain this at greater length in the second part, when studying the phenomenon of ecstasy. But it is the sublime vision itself which is here required to be explained. How comes it that it is to be met with among the ignorant as well as and better than among the learned? Among men without culture, in no way prepared to see what they see, to understand what they understand, to such an extent that they feel themselves passive and as though subjugated by a higher light, having no other sense of initiative than that of being able, at the beginning, to turn away their attention and withdraw themselves from the divine action, before it has entirely enraptured them?

The hypothesis of an intuition of genius would apply only to men of genius—to St Paul or St Thomas, for instance—who are the exception, and not to ordinary minds or to the ignorant, such as the poor fishermen of Genesareth, who form the greater number. Furthermore, it would not even apply to the first-named, for St Paul, St Thomas, and the great Doctors of the Church are unanimous in acknowledging in this their personal impotence, and proclaiming with deep conviction and enthusiasm the gift to be wholly free and from God.

Thus St Paul, after having avowed with confusion his rapture to the third heaven, hastens to humble himself and to confess his nothingness: "Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."[1] And again elsewhere: "For see your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble: but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his sight."[2]

The whole history of the Church is a repetition of this

[1] 2 *Cor.* xii 9. [2] 1 *Cor.* i 26-29.

first act of Providence. After the poor fishermen of Galilee, seers have been taken from among the ignorant according to the world, among shepherds and shepherdesses, as often as and still more often than among great Doctors and men of genius. Was not the saintly Curé d'Ars, for instance, in the eyes of his professors, put down as a *minus habens?*

If the rationalist hypothesis in no way explains the facts, will the *hypothesis concerning faith* prove more satisfactory? The latter does not predetermine the exclusion of the supernatural, but restricts it to the marvellous effects of Christian faith. Contemplation thus would be no more than the effect of a more active light of faith, when it is raised to a higher degree: and this postulates only an ordinary grace and not one that is extraordinary.

This theory, although not as bad as the former, is none the less not admissible, because it is contradicted by the facts observed. If it be admitted that the enlightenments and increasing though ordinary ardours of faith may be raised to the phenomenon of contemplation, as we have described it, we must logically conclude that the light and intensity of faith, having reached a certain degree, ought regularly to end in mystical contemplation, which is not only contrary to experience but also to the unanimous teaching of theologians.

It is, for them, a truth sanctioned by universal experience that it is possible to acquire an ardent and active faith, in the most eminent degree, without for all that ever reaching contemplation. And that contemplation, on the contrary, is found, at least transitorily, in souls in which belief is feeble, languishing, and even non-existent, as we see in the case of St Paul and of a great number of sinners, whose sudden conversions have been due to the vision of a higher light at a moment when they least expected it.[1]

Let us then *conclude.* Mystical contemplation is therefore the effect neither of a natural creation of the human mind or genius, nor of the raising of our faith to a higher degree in the regular course of grace; but it is a purely free and extraordinary gift of God, who, by manifesting himself to a soul, ordinarily believing, but occasionally unbelieving, exalts it and enraptures its powers. It then becomes completely passive beneath the

[1] St Teresa bears witness to this in these words: "I wish you to know that God sometimes shows great favour to people whose souls are in an evil state, that by this means he may snatch them out of the devil's grasp" (*Way of Perfection*, ch. xvi).

hand of God; its role of activity or of co-operation is reduced to consenting, by lending its attention to the vision which is unfolded before its eyes. In the ordinary way it should have distantly prepared itself for this, negatively by the purification of the senses, and positively by the acquisition of the virtues; and yet this preparation is not absolutely required, as God, by his power, is able to make good the deficiency in an instant. Here, indeed, in the words of St Teresa, " God does all."[1]

As to the *intimate nature of the grace of God* which produces contemplation, and its supernatural psychological force, we must leave the deeper study of this to the domain of speculative theology,[2] as did St Teresa, who never spoke of it, in spite of her well-known attachment to the teaching of St Thomas on grace and its intrinsic efficacy. It might even be thought that she was unaware of, or wished to ignore, the fact that mystical states are attributed by all theologians to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially to those of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. This, however, did not prevent her from clearly tracing the frontier line between passive or acquired and active or infused contemplation, and therefore between the two domains of *asceticism* and *mysticism*, and from throwing incomparable light on these two modes of operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

It will suffice here to refer the reader to the study already made of them in our *Treatise on Ascetic Theology*. Since the gifts are, indeed, not reserved to the mystical state, but are common to all spiritual life, for it is theologically certain that they are necessary to salvation, and all the more so to Christian perfection, we have already been obliged to consider them from the very beginning of these studies.

We saw then that the *gifts of the Holy Spirit* are infused and permanent habits, springing from sanctifying grace, which complete and transform the faculties of the soul, both intellectual and appetitive, in order to render them more docile and supple to the inspirations of grace. While the *infused virtues* make us act in conformity with the light of reason enlightened by faith, *humano modo*, the gifts tend to make us act under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so in a superhuman manner, *supra humanum modum*, without any reasoning.

[1] *Way*, ch. xxv.
[2] *Cf.* Meynard, O.P., *Traité de la vie intérieure*, vol. ii, p. 61 *ff.*

Sometimes the habits of these gifts, in order to pass into action, need to be roused up by actual graces, of infinitely varying degree and mode, so that all the acts of the gifts are not necessarily mystical. According to our view, what distinguishes the mystical states, in infused contemplation, is neither the higher degree nor the greater frequency of the gifts, especially those of wisdom and understanding, but a particular mode of these gifts. And this new mode is a *very special* kind of passiveness produced in our souls. While the ordinary mode consists in making us *act* and act *freely*, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without being conscious of this divine impulse, the extraordinary mode makes us *suffer* or consciously receive a state produced by God alone, sometimes sweet and blissful, sometimes sad and purifying, sometimes light-bringing or filled with a transparent darkness.

St John of the Cross, in his clear-cut style, defined this new mode: " Contemplation is not *action*, it is *suffering* or receiving." And St Teresa: " Here it is God who does all: all he asks of us is to put no obstacle in the way of his action." And this consent is itself only a condition and not a partial efficient cause of the work which God does in us and without our aid. St Thomas has well remarked this: thus, says he, the whole work belongs to grace alone: *Motus* (*quo consentimus*) *non est causa gratiae sed effectus : unde tota operatio pertinet ad gratiam.*[1]

How striking a contrast, not only with what is called *co-operating* grace, which concurs only in the fulfilment of a previous intention already existing, but also with the grace which St Thomas calls *operating with us*, or again, *assisting: Homo per gratiam operantem* adjuvatur *a Deo ut bonum velit.*[2] Of this grace operating with us, the holy Doctor has already said that it causes us to will freely, far from suppressing our free will: *Sic agitur homo a Spiritu sancto, quod etiam agit, inquantum est liberi arbitrii.*[3] So that the action produced is entirely from man as secondary cause, and wholly from God as first cause: and this is the ordinary method of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

In the other mode, on the contrary, that of grace *operating by itself*, " it is God who does all." As an example, St Thomas gives the case of the infusion of sanctifying grace

[1] I-II, q. cxi, a. 2, ad 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, ad 3.
[3] I-II, q. lxviii, a. 3, ad 2.

in the baptism of a little child, or even of an adult, the sole efficient cause whereof is the wholly gratuitous will of God.[1]

The like is true, in our view, for the infusion of mystical contemplation, which St John of the Cross so happily calls *contemplation received in faith*—in faith, it is true, which has become transparent, thanks to the experience of it which God allows us.[2] Likewise for all, or almost all, the other mystical graces, described later in the last four *Moradas* of St Teresa, which are only the progressive development of this first passive grace.

Now the immediate end of all these mystical graces—from the passive recollection of the powers to transforming union—is indeed the sanctification of our souls, and not the edification of the faithful: they are, then, graces of the kind called *gratum facientes*, and not graces *gratis datae*, and if sometimes certain theologians have likened them to the latter, without identifying them therewith, it is only because they are likewise wholly gratuitous, without any merit on our part, and would seem to form a kind of transition-species between the two categories.

Infused contemplation, then, is marked by the appearance, at least for a few fleeting moments, of a new mode of grace and of the gifts. While this grace is ordinarily *operating with us*, it becomes at certain moments *operating of itself alone*, in us and without our aid, producing in us involuntary passive states of which we are conscious, which are the very powerful source of vital reactions even more generous and meritorious.

One of the most reliable disciples of St Thomas, *Vallgornera, O.P.*, who attempted to compose a treatise on mystical theology with the scattered fragments of the holy Doctor, thought indeed that the ordinary methods of the three gifts of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, even if they are capable of explaining to us acquired or intermediate contemplation, yet are not enough to explain everything, since it is necessary to add to them, as a *fourth* efficient cause, *a grace even higher than the gifts*, and even a *fifth*, namely, some inferior

[1] *Gratia operans* (*sola*) *dicitur ipsa justificatio impii, quae fit ipsius doni gratuiti infusione. Hoc enim donum sola gratuita divina voluntas causat in nobis, nec aliquo modo ejus causa est liberum arbitrium, nisi per modum dispositionis sufficientis* (*De Verit.*, q. xxvii, a. 5, ad 1).

[2] *Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. ix, at end.

participation *in the light of glory*.[1] No less remarkable is it that this eminent interpreter of St Thomas calls this grace "even higher than the gifts," *altius donis*, "an extraordinary light," *extraordinarium lumen*, and kin to the graces *gratis datae* in the sense that it is not indispensable to sanctity. Now is not this precisely what, with Cardinal Billot and the usual opinion, we have called an *extraordinary mode* of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in opposition to their *ordinary* mode ?

Such is the teaching, in the name of St Thomas himself, of the *duality of the unitive ways*, so strongly emphasized later by St Teresa, and quite recently by the Teresian Congress at Madrid. There are then for the union of the soul with God active and ordinary ways, accessible to all, and passive ways, extraordinary and privileged. They are the gifts of the Holy Ghost which conduct us thither equally, though by different modes of operation; sometimes ordinary, sometimes "still higher," as Vallgornera says, and truly "extraordinary."

§ 4

Effects of mystical contemplation

As the tree is known by its fruit, so also must true contemplation be recognized, and distinguished from delusive counterfeits, by its effects. Whence those *rules for discernment of spirits*, so useful for the guidance of directors, which are to be found so abundantly developed in the works of St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and all the great mystics, and even in writers of lower rank.

We feel, however, that whilst fully acknowledging the primary importance of all these, it is possible to summarize briefly all that has so far been said on the subject.

These effects, notwithstanding their remarkable complexity and the difficulty experienced in making a complete analysis of them, may be classed in two groups of a very different nature. First, those that are passing, like the act of contemplation itself; and then those that are permanent and remain after it. Let us study them separately.

[1] Art. I. . . . *Principium formale elicitivum contemplationis supernaturalis aliquando est donum scientiae*. . . .—Art. II. . . . *Aliquando est donum sapientiae*. . . .—Art. III. . . . *aliquando est donum intellectus*. . . .—Art. IV. . . . *aliquando est altius donis Spiritus Sancti*. . . .—Art. V. . . . *Aliquando est lumen gloriae* (Th. a Vallgornera, *Th. myst. D. Th.*, q. iii, disp. 4).

1. The *passing effects* are inseparable from the act of contemplation; they are rather constituent elements of that act, and therefore cease with it. The following three may be considered as the chief of these:

(*a*) The first is the *passive* and involuntary *recollection* of the powers of the soul, which St Teresa will later describe as the "antechamber" of quiet or of the first degree of infused contemplation. As soon as it commences, it becomes a more or less complete *suspension* or *ligature* of the powers. Firstly of the understanding, which is not inactive, but can no longer act after its human manner. The discursive power of the reasoning is bound, and the intuitive power exerts itself upon new objects, such as the presence of God. Little by little all the other faculties become bound in turn, even to the organs of sense, which in ecstasy become insensible and immovable, as we shall explain in the proper place. Consciousness, however, remains, and the contemplative can describe his vision.

(*b*) The second effect is the *wonder* which immediately follows the suspending exaltation of the mind. This wonder may proceed from two causes: either the suddenness and novelty of the vision vouchsafed to the soul for contemplation, or the very nature of the object, the sublimity or depth of which surpasses the powers of the intellect and confounds the understanding.

This distinction is important as an answer to several theologians, such as Philip of the Trinity, Provincial of the Discalced Carmelites, who, in his *Summa Theologiae Mysticae*, thinks that wonder, far from being an essential effect of contemplation, diminishes by repetition or habit, and completely ceases in the more perfect stages.

It is, of course, obvious that the feeling of wonder which proceeds from the first cause, that of novelty, may be diminished and may entirely cease by the habitual frequency of the acts. But there always remains the second cause which fosters the feeling of wonder, and this is inexhaustible because it is a manifestation of the Infinite.

In heaven, where God reveals completely the splendour of his countenance, the blessed, prostrate with emotions of holy admiration, as the Church sings, *tremunt potestates*, will endlessly repeat the canticle: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth*. Never do they accustom themselves to such visions, and the wonder which results is eternal.

And even when on this earth God, instead of making manifest

his essence and his attributes, manifests but his presence alone, or else some supernatural truth, such as the transcendence of his being, the mind, in fixing its gaze on this object, continually unveils in it ever-increasing depths, unfathomable abysses, and in the presence of this Infinite which dominates it and encloses it on every side, it can never refrain from the deepest wonder. The Infinite, under whatsoever aspect it is presented to contemplation, will, therefore, be always an inexhaustible source of wonder.

(*c*) To the intellectual sensation of wonder must be added the delight of the heart, *love*, which all mystics, without exception, declare to be inseparable from contemplation. It is the third of its essential effects. Wonder leads spontaneously to love of the object admired. Then the heart overflows with thanksgiving, praise, and passionate expressions of tenderness and devotion, and the whole soul, enamoured of truth, beauty, and goodness, flings itself towards the beloved object, and unites itself thereto in a delectable outpouring of its whole being.

The body itself, after its own manner, becomes united with these transports, for it is greatly moved and realizes very forcibly the recoil of this spiritual joy: *Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum*, cries the Psalmist.[1] Whence the gaiety, tears, mystical intoxication, ecstasy, and other accidental phenomena of which we shall speak in the second part of this study.

There arises here, however, a *problem* which has been a matter of lively controversy among theologians: Is love in contemplation always in exact proportion to the intellectual vision? Is there necessarily a ratio of equality between the enlightenment of the mind and the fire enkindled in the heart?

On this point all agree that *there can never be love without some knowledge*, so that if knowledge be wanting, love for the object unknown becomes impossible, according to the axiom: *Ignoti nulla cupido*. Thus we must be guarded against taking too literally certain words of Dionysius the Mystic, St Bonaventure, Gerson, and many others, where they exalt the "divine darkness of love." By this is meant only relative, transparent darkness, according to the famous distinction of St Augustine: We are able to love an object hidden from sight, but never an object that is not known: *Invisa diligere possumus, incognita nunquam*.

[1] *Ps.* lxxxiii 3

But how then is it that two persons, with minds possessed of an equal degree of knowledge, may in no way correspond as regards the degree of vivacity or delicacy in the feelings of their hearts? Let us hearken to the answer, so full of truth, of St John of the Cross:

"There is a common saying that the will cannot love that of which the understanding has no knowledge. . . . But in a supernatural way God can certainly infuse love and increase it without infusing and increasing distinct knowledge. . . . Men may know little and love much, and on the other hand, know much and love little. In general, those spiritual persons whose knowledge of God is not very great are usually very rich in all that belongs to the will, and infused faith suffices them for this knowledge, by means of which God infuses and increases charity in them and the acts thereof, which are to love him more and more though knowledge is not increased. Thus the will may drink of love while the understanding drinks in no fresh knowledge."[1]

Hugh of Saint-Victor, in his commentary on Dionysius, answers this question in the same sense: "The heart may have greater strength than the understanding, and holy love often enters where knowledge cannot penetrate."[2]

If the affective element or love holds a higher place in contemplation than the clearness of vision, mystics give it the name of *seraphic* contemplation; if, however, it is the light which predominates, they call it *cherubic*. For we know how in the celestial hierarchy the Cherubim represent the brightness of knowledge and the Seraphim the ardour of love.

2. Having dealt with these three essential effects, the recollection and suspension of the powers, admiration, and love, which, like the act of contemplation itself, are *transitory*, we may now proceed to study the *permanent effects* which habitually dwell in the contemplative. They may be summed up in a word: they are *effects of holiness*. The vagueness of this expression enables the reader to perceive at once the difficulty of a hard-and-fast classification, and therefore the reason for the great variety of attempts made by mystical writers. Without delaying to compare and discuss them, we shall limit ourselves to pointing out briefly the six principal effects described by St Teresa.

[1] St John of the Cross, *Sp. Cant.* xxvi.
[2] *Exposit. in hierarch. coelest. S. Dionys.*, l. vii.

(*a*) The first permanent effect of contemplation is *peace* of the soul. According to the definition of peace given by St Augustine: *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis*—to have peace, we must repose in order, and the more perfect the order the more perfect will be the peace. But what more perfect order can be imagined here below than that of contemplation, in which the mind arrives at the Truth by a direct intuition, in which the heart is enraptured by the sovereign Good, in which the whole soul has reached, as nearly as is possible on this earth, the object of its eternal beatitude, there to repose with delight? In possessing himself of the two highest powers of the soul, and fixing them on himself, in essential order, God thus gives it a foretaste of heaven.

Nevertheless, the soul does not always reach this heavenly peace at the outset. Beginners are often restless, or at least surprised, at the sight of the new world, so difficult to understand, which they have entered. All that is new and mysterious causes distrust, hesitation, and doubt. A good director should know how to instruct, reassure, and encourage them, and also to console them in the heavy trials from which, as will be seen in its place, these extraordinary ways are not exempt.

(*b*) The second effect is the ever-increasing *tenderness* of conscience. The light of contemplation brings home to it such a contrast between the sanctity of God and its own misery, that the soul aspires with a generous effort to do away with the strange disproportion between its own repellent ugliness and the infinite beauty. Whence the need for expiation, for more and more complete purification with which we are astonished to find these holy souls possessed. The purer they appear to our crude eyes, in comparison with ordinary souls, the more they judge themselves, when compared with sanctity itself, imperfect and miserable, unworthy of the regard and favour of God. Their criterion and ours is not the same. They are lynx-eyed and we short-sighted.

Moreover, contemplation is not only a light which reveals to us the contrast between the sanctity of God and our own, it is a devouring flame, urging us to be consumed for love of him. To please God, always and everywhere: such is the motto which inspires and transfigures every action of these loving souls.

(*c*) The third effect is a profound *humility*, with its companion, *obedience*. The nearer we approach to God, the more clearly do we realize that he is everything and that we are

nothing except through him. But this conviction, which we may acquire by means of ordinary meditation, breaks forth into actual experience in contemplation, in which our passiveness in the hands of God, our total powerlessness to succeed therein, even in the feeblest measure, by our own effort, is made so abundantly evident. This absolute dependence on God, who alone communicates, increases, or withdraws the gift of contemplation, when once it has been felt by a contemplative soul, gives an entirely new stamp to its humility. From that time onwards, its one desire is to humble itself more and more in the sight of God and before man, in the need of reducing itself to nothing in its original wretchedness, in order to find its proper place. *Oportet illum crescere, me autem minui.* This is why true contemplatives, in order to be faithful to its command and to fulfil all justice, are as desirous of self-abasement and obedience as the worldly are enamoured of honour and glory.

(*d*) The fourth effect is the *gift of strength.* Contemplation finds its end in love, a love, indeed, as far beyond the ordinary as is the light of contemplation itself. So intense a love cannot fail to saturate the privileged soul and endow it with an indomitable energy for goodness and an heroic patience under trial. Like St Paul after being rapt to the third heaven, the soul reaches to the point where it defies every creature in heaven and earth, and even death itself, rather than break asunder the tenacious knot of divine charity: " Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation ? or distress ? or famine ? or nakedness ? or danger ? or persecution ? or the sword ? But in all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[1]

(*e*) *Hunger and thirst after justice*, which our Lord numbers among the seven beatitudes, is another effect of contemplation. It is proper to the divine food, on this earth, to sharpen the hunger of those who taste it in passing, and to render more burning the thirst of those who have once moistened their lips at this cup: *Qui edunt me adhuc esurient, et qui bibunt me, adhuc sitient.*[2] But in contemplation God gives himself but for a few moments, only to withdraw himself forthwith from sight and feeling, and this fugitive vision, this passing contact, can

[1] *Rom.* viii 35-39. [2] *Ecclus.* xxiv 29.

only increase further the yearnings of the soul, which becomes more and more athirst and anhungered for the heavenly nourishment.

(*f*) And so the sixth and last effect of contemplation is *impatience for the life of the blessed* and an increasing contempt for all else. *Quam sordet tellus, cum coelum aspicio*, cried St Ignatius after one of his ecstasies, and St Paul: *Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo.*[1] The soul is impatient to die only that it may eternally live that blessed life of which it has but caught a glimpse in ecstasy. Thus is the soul gently freed, without effort, by an irresistible attraction from on high, and once loosened from all earthly ties, it rises by contemplation, until it reaches the threshold of blessed eternity, awaiting the day and the hour when it must at length enter therein.

" I die because I die not," cried St Teresa, and this sublime expression is the refrain of one of her most heavenly canticles, one unequalled in beauty even by the lyric inspiration of a Racine, a Corneille, or a Chateaubriand.

Such are the principal effects of sanctity produced in a soul by true mystical contemplation. Their absence is a sure sign of illusion and of false mysticism. If, instead of peace, the so-called contemplative evinces unrest and sadness; instead of tenderness of conscience, becomes unmortified; instead of humility and a yearning for self-concealment, makes a parade of his heavenly favours and desires to exhibit them; instead of heroic strength of soul, shows evidence of feebleness and cowardice; instead of hungering and thirsting after justice, lives a lukewarm life; finally, if, instead of the ardent desire of heaven and impatience for the life of the blessed, he is troubled at the thought of death, it is useless to push inquiry further; useless to pass on to discuss marvellous deeds which he may perform: his illusion, if not his trickery, is sufficiently manifest.

On the contrary, the presence in a contemplative soul of these marks of eminent virtue is a proof, or at least a favourable sign, which would authorize us to examine with care any marvellous phenomena which accompany them.

The exercise of the virtues, or the ascetical life, therefore, does not cease with the beginning of the mystical life; rather it redoubles in intensity, for the mystical grace is not an end, but a new means of attaining that perfect union which is sanctity or heroic virtue.

[1] *Phil.* i 23.

§ 5

Duration of contemplation

The duration of contemplation, being another consequence of its nature, will help us to understand it more completely.

We may declare to start with that it is relatively short.

Several false mystics, such as the Quietists of the seventeenth century, whom Bossuet valiantly refuted in so masterful a manner, claimed that contemplation might be continuous and constitute a permanent state of holiness here below. This act, which they called " a gentle sinking into God," once produced, was uninterrupted and unchangeable. Whence it followed that it could not be repeated. It was an act of pure love which dispensed from the acts of all the other virtues, such as faith, hope, contrition, prayer, and the like, at the consequent risk of great relaxation in the reception of the sacraments, in public worship and in morals.

These dangerous novelties gave rise at the time to impassioned controversy, of which to-day we can form but a faint idea, and which even the authority of great bishops, like Bossuet and Fénelon, was not able to silence. There became necessary the king's intervention, and the condemnation by Pope Innocent XII (March 12, 1699).

St Thomas had refuted these excessive claims in advance, in an article in the *Summa Theologica*, of which we here give a summary. " Doubtless," he says, " there is no intrinsic contradiction in the idea of an uninterrupted and endless act of contemplation. Such is the contemplation of the blessed in heaven. But, on earth, this appears to be contrary to the laws which govern the union of the soul and the body. First of all, no operation of the mind is perpetual, and all are subject to the suspensions and relaxations required by organic life, such as rest and sleep. If this be the case with every human act in this mortal life, all the more must it be so in the case of the most intense and sublime act of all, for it is the culminating point of the spiritual life: *Nulla actio potest diu durare in sui summo. Summum autem contemplationis est ut attingat ad uniformitatem divinae contemplationis.*"[1]

Moreover, the physiological organism is absolutely opposed to it, whether the contemplation has an echo in the senses or not. In the first case the intellectual activity reverberates on the brain, and the affective outbursts on the heart and the

[1] II-II, q. clxxx, a. 8, ad 2.

circulation of the blood, as is evident in ecstasy, in which the whole body reflects with wonderful vigour the illumination and the transports of the soul. But these disturbances of the whole organism produce inevitable fatigue, which requires rest. A continuous miracle would be needed to enable the corporal powers to sustain the prolonged emotions of the contemplative act without fatigue.

If, on the contrary, we assume—unlikely though it be—that the body took no part whatever in a purely spiritual contemplation, so that there would be a suspension, not only of every discursive activity of the mind, but also of all reflex action in organic sensibility, the sensitive element would thus be subjected, because of this unnatural compression, to a fatigue perhaps even greater than that produced by an excess of activity. In any case, this would be a state so violent and abnormal that it could not last without danger of death.

We thus see, that whether it take a too active part to the detriment of its organs, or whether it be refused the part to which it has a right, and is deprived of that sensible activity which is its need and its life, it is in either case the body which prevents the perpetuity of contemplation.

Furthermore, having reached its climax, the contemplative act tends to slacken and to stop. The soul very quickly descends from heaven to earth. To make use of the pleasing image of St Gregory the Great, its flight is like that of the grasshoppers of which holy Job speaks, which are seen to rise with a bound, hover for a moment in the air and almost immediately fall back to earth on their feet.

It remains for us to measure, if possible, the *maximum duration* of this flight of the soul in mystical contemplation. We will here leave it to the saints who have had the experience to speak.

St Teresa, in speaking of the prayer of quiet, which was granted her from the first year of her religious life, said that "the prayer of union lasted but a short time; I know not," she added, "if it continued for the space of an *Ave Maria*." And elsewhere, speaking of the flight of the spirit, "the period of time . . . during which the faculties of the soul were entranced, is very short; if half an hour, that would be a long time. I do not think that I have ever been so long."[1]

Nevertheless, some writers grant, in exceptional cases, a longer duration.

[1] *Life*, ch. iv and xviii.

Philip of the Trinity assigns about an hour to it, as an extreme limit. Alvarez de Paz and Suarez are even more generous. They go as far as to think that God, by an extraordinary superabundance of grace, sometimes prolongs the act of mystical contemplation even beyond this limit.

This, however, is certain, that if the act be for a moment interrupted, it may be immediately renewed beneath the charm of a fresh attraction, so that a series of contemplative acts, following one another at short intervals, may give the appearance of one and the same contemplation.

This would explain the *long raptures* of several saints, such as those of St Francis of Assisi, which, according to eye-witnesses, seemed to last several hours, several days, and even several weeks.

Nevertheless, this marvel of duration could be otherwise explained. If, instead of speaking of the contemplation itself—that is to say, of the intuitive act and the suspension of the powers in God—all the secondary acts which precede and follow were also included, the solution would be very different. These acts, being much less perfect, and demanding a less absorbing attention, may, by their very nature, last much longer. Such, for instance, is the state of quiet or repose which commonly follows ecstasy, and which, according to the testimony of St Teresa, may be prolonged for many hours and even whole days. After these short suspensions of ecstasy, she says, "(the faculties) are quiet for another moment and then recover themselves once more; in this way some hours may be, and are, passed in prayer (of union with God)."[1]

Finally, if, instead of only considering the acts which precede, accompany, or follow contemplation, we embrace also the habitual desire to be united to God and to be fixed on him, which they develop in the will, it is clear that this disposition, like all the habits may be permanent in a soul and remain there for whole years. In this very wide, though somewhat misused sense, contemplation may be said to be perpetual, and Bossuet willingly granted this to the Quietists, first, however, taking care to call it by the much less ambiguous title of the *habit of holy love*, which may very well shape a whole life. These are his words, taken from the *Instruction sur les états d'oraison*, ch. i:

"Contemplation," he writes, "may subsist in a depth of good will which is fixed on God alone by the habit of holy

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii.

love. Now by the strength of this habit, in a sense unshakeable, *one tends* to uninterrupted prayer, for nothing is forgotten by which to achieve it . . . (This good will) produces a succession of good movements so consecutive, so uniform, that it is clear that the whole depends on the same inward principle—that is to say, on the habit of holy love; and this it is that, during the course of this life, is called contemplation or perpetual prayer."

We may conclude from these illuminating principles, coming to us with such authority, that we must distrust it if the phenomenon of contemplation appears to continue for too long a time. It might be easily confused with that which precedes or follows it; above all, one might easily mistake for infused contemplation a very much lower and more usual kind of prayer without any infused species, which is not the real "intuitive sensation of God."

§ 6

Persons predisposed to mystical contemplation

The principle must be laid down that no social condition nor human activity, always provided that it is in no way incompatible with virtue and holiness, can be a bar to the mystical favours of contemplation. Men and women, children and old men, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, married and single, seculars and religious, priests and layfolk, in the midst of the world and in solitude; in fact all, no matter what their age, their rank, their education, or their occupation, may be raised by God to this high state of sanctity.

It may be said in passing that this shows that mystical contemplation is the result neither of intelligence nor of genius, nor of this or that degree of sensitiveness, nor of temperament, nor of environment; it shows, in a word, that it cannot be produced by any natural cause whatsoever, and that it is a supernatural and truly divine gift.

Nevertheless, though *temperament* is never an insurmountable obstacle to the gift of contemplation, it would be a mistake to be unwilling to reckon with it in forming a judgement as to the aptitude of a subject. Alvarez de Paz goes so far as to say: "There are perfect souls to whom God refuses this gift because their temperament is not sufficiently calm for contemplation."[1]

[1] *De inquisitione pacis*, vol. iii, p. 1692 (Mainz edition).

Not all, in fact, have the qualities which go to make the mystic, either because of their slowness of mind or because of their restless and mobile nature. But the grace of God, far from destroying nature, only raises it by transforming it, very rarely, if ever, forcing it.

No special *age* is required. A goodly number of contemplatives have received the first illuminations of grace from their tenderest infancy. The examples of St Aloysius Gonzaga and St John Berchmans are well known to all. According to the Bollandists, whose criticism is so severe and accepted as authoritative by historians, Blessed Christine of Stommeln had her first ecstasy, which lasted three days, at the age of ten; Blessed Osanna of Mantua was hardly six years old when she was favoured with a similar grace.

Among *widows* we have already cited the famous names of St Bridget of Sweden, St Elizabeth of Hungary, St Jane Frances de Chantal, Blessed Marie d'Oignies, and many others. Among the converted women who had been *sinners*, St Mary Magdalen, St Margaret of Cortona, Zoe, Thais, Pelagia, etc., are celebrated.

Among *married women*, it will suffice to mention the most recent example, that of Blessed Anna Maria Taigi, who, in spite of her preoccupations and the duties of a mother, was raised to the most wonderful of contemplative lives. " Her heart was under the spell of those superhuman attractions which, in the Church, only belong to great contemplatives. . . . This woman, poor and ignorant, but faithful to grace, became the rival of St Teresa, of St Bonaventure, of St John of the Cross. . . . When she began to pray, rapture was as natural to her as a simple prayer is to us, and her soul was so absorbed that it seemed to wish to leave her body."[1]

It is true, however, that such a case is rare, because men and women in the bonds of matrimony have their hearts too much occupied with creatures to be able to give them wholly to God, as St Paul says: *Qui cum uxore est, sollicitus est quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeat uxori, et divisus est.*[2]

This same example will suffice to show that *unlettered* folk, knowing neither how to read nor write, far from being excluded from heavenly favours, are sometimes and even often favoured with them, for, as Cardinal Bona says: " It often happens that a simple man of the people, who cannot read, speaks more

[1] *La Vén. Anna-Maria Taigi*, by Fr. G. Bouffier, pp. 120 *ff.*

[2] 1 *Cor.* vii 33.

learnedly of God and of the things of God than a celebrated Doctor, who has passed all his life with books. This is because experience surpasses speculation and love knowledge, or because we unite ourselves more closely to God by the affections of the heart than by the meditations of the mind."

We would add that it is also because the poor, being deprived of literary culture and of all pretension to knowledge, and having only learnt the rudiments of the simple catechism, are usually more humble, more distrustful of themselves and have more confidence in the help of God. To these souls, not filled with themselves, and poor in spirit, God is pleased to communicate himself more freely, and seems jealous to be their only Master and to teach them from on high.

It must not, however, be concluded that *knowledge* is, of itself, an obstacle, and it is this exaggeration which Innocent XII condemned together with the sixty-seventh proposition of Molinos, the curious text of which follows:

"A theologian has less aptitude for contemplation than a man without culture: firstly, because his faith is not so simple; secondly, because he is not humble enough; thirdly, because he does not care so much about his own salvation; fourthly, because, having his head full of imaginations, ideas, opinions, and controversies, he cannot enter into the pure light."

This whimsical statement is certainly not altogether false. It may happen that as regards certain scholars all these conclusions are justified and place the ignorant above them. But it is an insult to knowledge and to truth itself to make this an absolute principle. In what way, we would ask, has the eminent knowledge of saints like St Augustine, St Hilary, St Chrysostom, St Gregory, St Bonaventure, or St Thomas, been able to prejudice the ardour of their faith, the depth of their humility, their zeal for their own salvation, or the liberty of their minds to enjoy the most lofty contemplation? On the contrary, this knowledge has helped them not a little to become united to God, to correspond with his lights, and to grow in holiness.

"No doubt," says St Thomas, "knowledge may incline man to trust in himself, and consequently prevent him abandoning himself entirely to God. It may thus occasionally become an obstacle to devotion, whereas simple folk and poor women find in their humility a great love of God. Nevertheless, when great virtue comes to be combined with knowledge in

order to render it submissive to God, devotion can only be the gainer."[1] It is not, therefore, the fault of their knowledge if certain scholars are not contemplatives, but rather of their lack of humility.

It is still more valuable and more forcible for us to recall the testimony of St Teresa, who had suffered so much from the ignorance of certain confessors.

" Learning," she writes, " in my opinion, is a great treasury in the matter of this exercise, if it be accompanied with humility. I observed this a few days ago in some learned men who had shortly before made a beginning, and had made great progress. This is the reason why I am so very anxious that many learned men may become spiritual."[2]

Again, St Francis de Sales says: " Knowledge in itself is not opposed to devotion, but exceedingly useful thereto, and if they are combined they help each other admirably; although it often happens that, through our misfortune, knowledge prevents the early beginning of devotion, in so far as it is apt to puff up and engender pride. Assuredly the knowledge of saints such as St Cyprian, St Augustine, St Hilary, St Chrysostom . . not only much enlightened but also greatly refined their devotion."[3]

We may then *conclude* that there may be contemplatives in every walk of life, and that knowledge, far from being an obstacle to contemplation, is a valuable aid to it when it is accompanied by humility.

Nevertheless, are there not certain states of soul which seem better disposed to contemplation and which appear to be preferred by the divine Spouse? Most certainly, and all writers are unanimous in indicating the three following:

First, *virgins:* hence the partiality shown by our Lord for St John, above the other apostles, had this formal object, as St Jerome and all tradition bear witness: *Diligebat eum Jesus quoniam specialis praerogativa castitatis ampliori dilectione fecerat dignum.*[4] St John himself shows us, in his sublime vision in the island of Patmos, virgin souls without carnal stain, accompanying the spotless Lamb, and nearest to his heart: *Hi sunt qui cum mulieribus non sunt coinquinati; virgines enim sunt. Hi sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit.*[5]

[1] II-II, q. lxxxii, a. 3, ad 3. [2] *Life*, ch. xii.
[3] *Treatise on the Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. iv.
[4] *Contra Jovin.* [5] *Apoc.* xiv 4.

Such, too, is the formal teaching of our Lord himself in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."[1] Nothing could be more fitting. This voluntary emancipation from the pleasures of sense raises the soul to the dignity of an angel, and even higher, as St John Chrysostom truly says, for the angels, having no bodies, cannot have the merit of virginity: they are not virgins but only spotless. Man alone is able to obtain this heroic merit, and by this ennoblement of his nature, to become less unworthy of contemplative union with God, who is pure Spirit.

In order to attain to these heights of virginity and to maintain them, the human soul has need of the support of all the other virtues, of which virginity is, as it were, the synthesis and the most delicate flower. It requires, above all, the constant practice of meditation and prayer. Now what more fitting way can there be to serve as an introduction to the prayer of contemplation?

Finally, it is quite natural that the divine Bridegroom should prefer those souls which have known no other union, those hearts which have not been consumed with other fires—in a word, virgin hearts. Moreover, he finds in them greater reciprocity, a more perfect intimacy, for the human heart has need of love, and, not being able to remain alone and desolate, attaches itself so much the more to God in that its affections are not shared by others. The more it is void of earthly love, the more is it filled with love divine. "He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God."[2]

May we go still further and maintain that, if all virgin hearts, whether of men or women, are specially fitted for contemplation, those of women, of young maidens, seem to be preferred of God? Assuredly, and it is in this sense that we should understand those words which the Church addresses to Mary in her liturgical chant: *ora pro devoto femineo sexu.* This sex is the more devout and more apt for union with God. History bears sufficient witness to it, but there are also reasons for the fact.

Women have their faults, no doubt. They are often nervous, impressionable, passionate, eager for extraordinary emotions; they are at times deceived and become an easy prey to illusions; also, as we shall point out later on, it would be wise to distrust certain of their stories, and to know the careful precautions

[1] *Matth.* v 8. [2] 1 *Cor.* vii 33.

that a good director should take, in order to distinguish the true from the fanciful. But it is none the less right to recognize in them those qualities which dispose them in a higher degree for the contemplative life.

The innate sense of religion in a woman is, indeed, usually greater and more delicate than that of a man, and therefore her aptitude for more intimate union with God must be acknowledged. She has a natural modesty, which better protects her innocence and the purity of her soul. She has a more sensitive and affectionate organism, which renders her more accessible to the divine love and more capable of heroic devotion. She has the sense of her sex's original feebleness, which renders her more humble and more inclined to seek in God a refuge and support. Finally, woman is usually less distracted than man by matters of business, by study, and by the responsibilities of material existence, and is, therefore, better disposed towards the interior and contemplative life.

Scaramelli adds a last reason which we ought not to despise: it is that God would seem to have willed, as it were, to make amends to woman, who is unable to aspire to the honour and consolations of the priesthood and the ministry of souls, by the sublimity and the spiritual joys of contemplation. However this may be, God's preference for the weaker sex in the choice of contemplative souls is an undeniable fact. St Teresa, in her *Life* (ch. xl), expressly states that the number of women raised to contemplation greatly surpasses that of men, and she adds that St Peter of Alcantara had remarked the same thing.

The third category of privileged souls are the friends of *solitude* and the *cloister*. As witnesses to this we have St Antony, St Arsenius, St Pachomius, St Hilarion in the desert; St Benedict, St Bruno, St Francis of Assisi in the silence and seclusion of their monasteries; and St Teresa, Blessed Angela, and many other holy religious behind the grates of their convents. On the contrary, contemplatives in the world are the exception.

The reasons for this are so manifest that it is useless to develop them at great length. It is, in fact, clear that these holy retreats must contribute to the realization of that detachment of soul which disposes it to union with God and to the sublime flight of contemplation, by total separation from and contempt of the world; by silence, by constant meditations, by frequent use of the sacraments and Holy Communion; by the habitual renunciation of one's own will, obedience, voluntary

poverty, the subjecting of the body to every kind of austerity. All this is a continual victory of the spirit over the flesh, of grace over nature; and when nature is once overcome, we rise above its contingencies, nearer to the angels and to God, all prepared to receive his intimate communications.

That is why contemplative souls abound in the cloisters, so that St Francis de Sales considered that all his nuns had an aptitude for the prayer of quiet at least. This, also, is why the Church only entrusts the direction of nuns to the most delicate and capable hands, chosen out of a thousand.

Such are the three categories of souls particularly fitted for the favours of contemplation. Without intent to limit in any way God's almighty power and merciful goodness, we think that it is on these souls, being more worthy and better disposed to receive them, that he pours out, by preference, the most precious of his mystical gifts.

CHAPTER III

KINDS OF MYSTICAL CONTEMPLATION

HAVING studied the nature of mystical contemplation, and having attempted to understand what it is not and what it is, we must now look into the various species into which it may be divided. Division, in fact, is, next to definition of its nature, the second essential manifestation of human knowledge on any given subject.

In the same way that the *white light* of the sun is composed of seven distinct colours, which form a complete scale comparable to the gamut in music, so also does the divine light, as revealed through the contemplation of holy mystics, appear to be made up of different colours, which blend with one another into one marvellous hierarchy.

May not these colours be but degrees of intensity, different shades of one and the same single colour? We think not. There is, for instance, between the vision of ecstasy and the mystical touch of the prayer of quiet the same *specific difference* as between touch and sight or any others of our five senses; and it is not without reason that all the mystical saints from St Augustine to St Teresa have made use of the famous metaphor of the five spiritual senses to express in human language the intimate fact which they experienced.

We cannot, therefore, endorse the language of contemporary writers who are content to speak of *degrees* of contemplation, for it is a question of specific differences. And as each species may in its turn have various degrees, as each colour has its shades, great disorder would result from the classification which they suggest and render complicated by the confusing of simple degrees with distinct kinds.

A classification of the contemplative states is none the less a *very difficult* and arduous task—whether because of our lack of personal experience, for in this we are like the blind trying to classify colours which they have never seen by analogy with the sounds which they hear; or because of the very nature of these supernatural states, so mysterious that they are difficult to submit to analysis and to express in formulas, even for those who have had experience of them; or, finally,

because of the diversity of God's ways, the full liberty of which at times baffles our foresight and calculation. These difficulties should in no way surprise us: for in the natural sciences mystery everywhere abounds, and inexplicable enigmas perpetually present themselves to the most learned; with far greater reason, therefore, must we expect to find them, and admit them as inevitable, in supernatural science.

Hence arise innumerable divergences in the various classifications drawn up by theologians. Many claim to distinguish *seven* contemplative states, doubtless because the mystical number seven is the more attractive. St Teresa is content with *four*, but as she adds the three preceding states of ordinary prayer, she thus comes back, indirectly, to the perfect number, seven.

Far be it from us to discuss, or even to enumerate, these countless divergences—it would take long and be useless for our object—we will content ourselves with following the order minutely described by St Teresa, whose authority is here unrivalled, and fully approved by St John of the Cross.[1]

According to the Saint, then, there are *four* very different contemplative *states*. She also calls them *Mansions* of the *Interior Castle* of the soul. These mansions, which are not simple *degrees* of intensity in the same love or the same union, are rather like rooms of varied style and furniture, altogether distinct; although they communicate with each other and are so many stages in the ascension of the soul towards God. They are an ascending progress towards an ever more intimate penetration of the creature by the Creator, and thereby towards an angelic life more and more freed from bodily shackles. Nevertheless, this passing from stage to stage is not obligatory, nor even the most frequent fact, and each one of the mansions is so arranged as to enable one to pass a lifetime in it.

Here are the names of these four spiritual mansions:

1. Prayer of passive recollection and *quiet*.
2. Prayer of *union*.
3. Prayer of *ecstatic union*.
4. Prayer of *perfect union*, or spiritual marriage.

These may be looked upon as four superimposed stories of the same spiritual building.[2]

[1] *Canticle*, ch. xiii and xxii.

[2] An attempt has been made, but without success, to separate the three highest (union, ecstasy, marriage), and to look upon them as

At the same time we may recall to mind the three mansions which precede them, corresponding approximately to the three stages of the ascetic life: vocal prayer in the purgative way, mental and affective prayer in the illuminative way, and prayer of simplicity in the unitive way.

This makes, in all, seven distinct mansions; but, as has been seen, these are not cut off from each other by impenetrable barriers, except as regards the two orders of asceticism and mysticism, between which we have already established a fundamental and irreducible distinction, based on the test of a *knowledge that is truly experimental or a sensation of the Divine or of divine things.*

We propose to attempt to visit these mansions in turn and to acquaint ourselves with their nature and their inward structure.

§ 1

Prayer of passive recollection and quiet

Passive recollection and quiet, in the eyes of St Teresa, are not two different kinds of prayer, but different stages of the same prayer, or, to make use of the Saint's familiar metaphor, the first is like the vestibule or the antechamber of the same spiritual mansion, the first in the mystical order.[1] Let us see in what it consists.

Comparison between two phenomena is the first step in studying and understanding them. Now, *passive recollection*, with which we are here concerned, is entirely different from the active recollection of the ordinary kinds of prayer, even that of simplicity. It is in no way ordered by an act of the will, nor is it the result of our own effort or labour, but solely of divine action.

God suddenly takes hold of the faithful soul, not only during prayer or meditation, but even in the midst of the most ordinary material occupations. Then all at once the soul

extraneous, extraordinary, and outside the general plan of the normal mystical ways, so that prayer of quiet would thus be the highest of these ways. This, obviously, is to mutilate mysticism, under the pretext of simplifying it and rendering it accessible to all. Every work of St Teresa, as well as of St John of the Cross, proclaims on the contrary a manifest continuity, from quiet and union up to transforming union or spiritual marriage.

[1] "When I attained to some degree of supernatural prayer—I speak of the prayer of quiet" (*Life*, ch. xxii).

finds itself—it knows not how—separated from the objects which surround it, thrown back wholly on its inward self, absorbed by a thought, as yet confused, but most profound, of the presence of God within it, as though warned that God is about to speak and his voice to make itself heard in a most complete inward solitude.

" This is a kind of recollection," says St Teresa, " which, I believe, is supernatural. There is no occasion to retire nor to shut the eyes, nor does it depend on anything exterior; involuntarily the eyes suddenly close and solitude is found, without any labour of one's own." And a little further on the Saint concludes: " This recollection helps us greatly when God bestows it on us. But do not fancy you can gain it by thinking of God dwelling within you . . . [this] is not the prayer of recollection, for by the divine assistance everyone can practise it, but what I mean is quite a different thing."[1]

That is why this recollection has been called *wholly passive* or *infused*, and how it is, by this same passiveness, that the soul leaves the ordinary ways in order to enter into the mystical state.

Nevertheless, let it be once more carefully noted that this passiveness is far from completely suppressing our freedom, which is still exercised, although indirectly and in a different way. In active recollection, it is by means of personal effort and initiative that we bring our freedom into action. In passive recollection, it is by willing compliance with the good pleasure of God. The soul lets itself go voluntarily, and freely abandons itself to the action of divine grace, for it still could, at least in the initial stage of this gentle pressure, turn away and become distracted, and thus break the charm. Moreover, at this point it has lost consciousness neither of itself nor of its freedom.

The two kinds of recollection, then, differ essentially as to their *causes;* they also differ as to the psychological *nature* of the phenomenon. It is again St Teresa who will instruct us. She explains that in this divine embrace which seizes it so suddenly, the soul meets with a very different sensation from that of ordinary recollection, and, as a consequence, it is most difficult to bring it home to those who have never experienced it. She none the less attempts to describe this inward call from God, which collects our wandering and volatile powers by means of a startling signal, and she compares it to the voice, so gentle, so winning and so strong, of the shepherd suddenly calling together his scattered sheep.

[1] *Int. Castle*, 4th M., ch. iii.

This saint experienced then, as it were, a powerful and unexpected signal which made her tremble in every limb, and this comparison appears to her to be so faithful and expressive that she immediately adds: " I think I never put this matter so clearly before."[1]

This passive recollection is finally characterized by its *effects*, both exterior and interior. The eyes shut spontaneously, the ears seem closed to every outward sound and to all human speech; the limbs become motionless, the attitude of the whole body bespeaks the most profound recollection. Within, imagination is silenced; all movements of sense are calmed, and the mind becomes wrapped in itself in expectation of great things.

The powers of the soul, however, interior or exterior, are not, as yet, suspended. The outward senses are not powerless to see, to hear, and to fulfil their normal functions; the understanding can still reason and discourse. Hence it is not a real but only an apparent suspension of the powers, and it would be better, in order to avoid ambiguity, to call it by the name of *spiritual silence*. It is the silence of expectation which precedes a great event: the prayer of quiet.

It is only then that the sense of the presence of the invisible God develops with sufficiently great intensity really to suspend the natural play of the faculties. Discursive reasoning first ceases, becoming changed to simple intuition; this is enough for an actual suspension. Then the other faculties are suspended in turn; all must be more or less silent whilst the soul fixes its attention on the presence of its divine object, in the immobility of its contemplation.

But before entering on the study of this new state—that of mystical quiet—let us call to mind certain *counsels given by St Teresa* to those souls favoured by the grace of passive recollection: counsels which should not be ignored by a good director if he would guide souls well.

First, it would be imprudent to wish to make an effort to transform the silence of recollection into real suspension of the powers, between which, as we have just pointed out, there is so profound a difference. Since all mystical gifts proceed from God, and from him alone, without any interference on our part, our effort would be as useless as that of a newly hatched chick trying to fly before it had wings.

[1] *Int. Castle*, 4th M., ch. iii.

Moreover, St Teresa does not hesitate to call this effort a folly and to foretell its failure: "If the King makes no sign of listening or of seeing us, there is no need to stand inert, like a dolt, which the soul would resemble if it continued inactive. In this case its dryness would greatly increase." She also finds in this vain attempt a lack of humility, and a vain seeking after self and our own advantage. "How can we be self-oblivious," she cries, "while keeping ourselves under such strict control that we are afraid to move, or even to think, or to leave our minds enough liberty to desire God's greater glory and to rejoice in the glory which he possesses? When his Majesty wishes the mind to rest from working he employs it in another manner." And she concludes with her great common sense: "Do not let us try to charm [our faculties] to sleep, but permit them to do their work until divinely called to something higher."[1]

The *second* counsel to be given to souls who have been admitted to this state of passive recollection, is only to taste of the joy and sweetness which it brings with great soberness and moderation. Inwardly, only to enjoy it according to the good pleasure of God, with that perfect detachment which makes us prefer his most holy will to our own consolation and well-being; outwardly to observe due sobriety in speech and effusiveness. Above all, to avoid indiscreet confidences, but rather to practise silence and self-effacement before men in order not to exhaust the sources of the grace of God.

Finally, the *last* counsel is that of childlike abandonment into the hands of God; an abandonment which will exclude all preoccupation and impatience for the next visit of his grace. God will come of himself and in his own time. It is enough for the soul to submit itself entirely to his good pleasure, ever holding itself in readiness to enter, at the first signal, into that rendezvous of quiet to which the good Master is about to call it.

This holy recollection, indeed, ends in *mystical quiet*. For, as we have said, it is but the vestibule or antechamber of the first mansion of the mystical castle. What, then, is this new state?

As we have already hinted, it first of all consists in the *suspension* of the powers of the soul. Not yet of them all, it is true, for the suspension of the outward senses is reserved for

[1] *Int. Castle*, 4th M., ch. iii.

the higher prayer of ecstasy; but at least in the suspension of all discursive reasoning and of the "discourse" which is normally performed by the mind through a succession of images and mental forms combined.

Whence the suppression even of colloquies of the soul with God, and of acts of adoration, admiration, love, and so on, expressed by inward words, successive and varied. All that activity of the mind and heart which, in a rather tumultuous way, fills up ordinary prayers, and which our Lord himself called more or less imperfect *multiloquium*, is replaced by a single and very simple act, more profitable, though making less noise; an act most easy and most sweet, far less akin to labour than to repose of the mind and the heart.

We now begin to understand the true sense of the expression *suspension of the powers*, of which, in keeping with all the mystics, we have made use, in spite of its ambiguity. Suspension of a power in no way implies—as the obvious sense seems to indicate—that the power becomes inactive and plunged in sleep or a sort of temporary death: far from that. A suspended power, in the mystical sense, is still active; it may even then attain its maximum intensity, but it can only act in a certain way, after a new and superhuman manner, and on a certain object. Bossuet, therefore, more correctly calls this state *a ligature* of the power.

Thus, for example, the understanding in the normal state is able to be exercised in every branch of truth, embracing every object of human knowledge, and to pursue its enquiries by means of every process, logical, intuitive, or discursive. In the state of mystical suspension, on the contrary, it will be fixed on one single object—for example, God or some divine attribute—and it will find that it is beyond its power to occupy itself with anything else; furthermore, it will only be able to seize its object through intuition and will feel that it is incapable of all reasoning or any other discursive method.

Such is the true idea of the suspension or ligature of this power, whence it results that it is momentarily *incapable* of passing from God to any other object, or of seeking him by other natural means.

Nevertheless, this suspension of the powers is as yet only the *negative side* of the prayer of quiet. Let us hasten to examine its *positive side*.

In the state of mystical suspension, our mind and heart can only contemplate God and can enjoy him alone, but as they

concentrate all the energy of the soul on this single act, they then reach their *maximum of activity*. A brief analysis will show us how this develops.

As soon as the soul feels itself suddenly overtaken and invaded by passive recollection beneath the hand of God, the mind *contemplates the real presence* of the divine Being, in the sense explained, and the heart reposes in the sweet peace of its love: two acts which become blended in one. Here we have something altogether new in the prayer of quiet.

The first act is that of intuition: it is the *simple interior regard* of which all the mystics so often speak, but which is, in this first degree of mystical prayer, an obscure touch rather than a vision. It is the presence of God felt without being seen, just as it might happen that we might very certainly feel the presence of a friend in the darkness of the night by taking his hand, without being able to distinguish his face.

" O gentle hand !" cried the enraptured St John of the Cross, " O delicate touch, which hast the taste of eternal life !"[1] And in his *Night*[2] he describes at length his experience of the presence of God, felt without the medium of the imagination or of any faculty of sense, which he calls a " divine touch."

This divine touch gives to the soul an absolute certainty of the presence of God, to which St Teresa insistently returns. In quiet, she exclaims, " the soul *does not see* the good Master who teaches it, although clearly conscious of his presence."[3]

Moreover, she answers an objection: " But how can a person who is *incapable of sight and hearing* see or know these things ? I do not say that she *saw* it at the time, but that she perceives it clearly afterwards, not by any vision but by a certitude which remains in the heart which God alone could give."[4]

Blessed Angela of Foligno thus gives a description of this contact of the soul: " She feels," she says, " that the infinite God is *blended* with her and keeps her company."[5] She thus experienced the strict exactness of that metaphor familiar to philosophers and theologians, in which, dealing with the infinity of God, they compare the creature to a little sponge plunged in the ocean of the divinity and wholly saturated with its waters. The mystical gift which we are studying consists precisely in being conscious of him by means of a spiritual sensation.

[1] *Living Flame*, str. 2, v. 3-4.
[2] Bk. ii, ch. xxiii.
[3] *Conceptions of the Love of God*, ch. iv.
[4] *Int. Castle*, 5th M., ch. i.
[5] *Bolland.*, n. 145.

Whatever difficulty we may have in understanding a feeling, of which we lack the experience, we must admit it as a fact, confirmed unanimously by the contemplative saints, all of whom have at least reached this first degree of contemplation. This fact is likewise admitted by every mystical theologian of authority. As an example, we will quote the words of the learned Jesuit Scaramelli, in which he describes the union of quiet.

" In the same manner that the human body touches another body and is touched thereby, and so feels its presence, at times with pleasure, so also does the soul *touch* or is *touched* by a spiritual substance, and it feels the presence thereof with the sensation proper to a pure spirit, at times with great joy, if, for instance, it is God who touches it and is present to it. . . . In the same way that our outward senses make us know the presence of their objects by means of material and crude (but intuitive) sensations, so does the soul perceive the presence of God by a spiritual sensation, at once delicate, pure, and simple."[1]

This single quotation suffices to show that there is no question here of a moral or metaphoric touch, as when it is said that God has touched the soul or the heart of a sinner. No, we have here a pure and spiritual reality. The fact, we repeat once more, is unanimously experienced by contemplatives and acknowledged as true by the masters of the interior life.

It will doubtless be noticed that this divine touch remains obscure, and, at least in this first stage of contemplation, few new enlightenments, or none at all, are given to the mind. But is it not a novelty to be able to confirm by experience the knowledge we already hold of the presence of God? . . . If this obscure light captivates us and masters us by a mere touch, if its heat inflames and enraptures our hearts with love, is not this already a quite new and infinitely precious gift? Is not love of far greater value to us than knowledge?

Let us hearken to the profound and admirable teaching of Bossuet on this subject. He asks how the soul is enlightened in the prayer of quiet, and whether it is by fresh knowledge which comes to enrich the mind, like that which we are accustomed to seek by reading books and studying human science, and he answers: " No, it is, on the contrary, by depriving itself (of a useless and embarrassing burden of knowledge); it is by losing the rich substance of all those beautiful

[1] *Directorium Mysticum*, tr. iii, n. 24, 27.

thoughts, all those beautiful words which accompany its inward acts; by this means it is enabled to speak the pure language of the heart. Until this is reached, we continue to speak to ourselves in human language, and we clothe our thoughts in the words we use in our intercourse with others. But in the prayer of quiet, we actually speak with God, and have no other language than that which God alone hears, that which we have called the language of the heart; above all, by that act of love, which neither desires nor is able to explain itself to God but through himself. *We only tell him that he is loved by loving him*, and the heart then speaks to God alone. Thought being thus purified from all that makes it gross, images, expressions, human language, the soul tastes the purest of all joys, which is God, not only by means of the purest of all the inward faculties, but also by the purest of all its acts, and unites itself intimately with the truth, even more by the will than by the intelligence."[1]

To sum up, in the prayer of quiet the mind ceases almost all intellectual labour, and, yielding to the heart, finds repose in the contemplation of God's realised presence.

The heart, in fact, is the principal agent in the prayer of quiet, and again its role is very gentle and simplified. " It is therefore useless," says St John of the Cross, " to bring the living waters of holy love from far away by long and complicated aqueducts of thought, figure and form; the soul is poised on the brink of the source, which is the bosom of God. Furthermore, if an attempt be made to force that soul to return to the labour of meditation, it would evince the greatest repugnance, like a little child torn from its mother's breast, whence it draws abundant milk, to oblige it to seek, with effort, the common food."

Not only does the torrent of holy love then flow without effort and most abundantly, but the heart also understands how to express itself to God without any effort of speech. As Bossuet has so well said: " We only tell God that he is loved by loving him." It is the most complete act of love, because it consumes itself wholly therein, without becoming lost in vain protestations or manifestations of love.

This simplicity of action, this method at once so simple and so high of contemplating and of loving, is nevertheless that which *bewilders novice souls*, and throws them at times into a state of astonishment and distressing doubt as to the value of

[1] *Instructions sur les états d'oraison*, bk. v, § 18.

their prayer. They imagine that their quiet is synonymous with sloth, and that they are wasting their time in yielding themselves to this new form of prayer.

So that the passing from ordinary prayer to that of quiet is often marked by a very painful crisis of conscience, brought about by the novelty of the supernatural world in which the soul finds itself for the first time. It is important that the soul, or at least its director, should know that there is nothing in this crisis to occasion anxiety, provided that an intelligent direction, seconding and not upsetting the designs of God, is applied towards lessening the duration and the sharpness of this trial.

With this end in view, the following *three remedies* will be made use of by a wise director.

The *first* must be to reassure such souls by the argument from authority. St Teresa, St Francis de Sales, Bossuet, Fénelon, and many other lights of the Church, have clearly described and analysed this species of prayer, and have approved it as a gift of God. All the contemplative saints, without exception, have practised it with benefit, and owe to it a good part of their advancement in the ways of perfection. More than this, they have often had to calm these same scruples. Thus, St Teresa tells us in her *Life* that a pious soul, deeply afflicted at being no longer able to meditate, came to confide to her this trouble and to consult her. Yet after inquiry she had no difficulty in discovering that this soul, without suspecting it, was practising the prayer of quiet, and she gave her every encouragement to continue. Bossuet himself has shown that this fact was very frequent. Also he endeavoured to forewarn against it in his *Instruction sur les états d'oraison*, and in those wise *Règles*, which he drew up for the Nuns of the Visitation at Meaux.

In the *second* place, it should be explained to souls thus troubled by the state of quiet, why it is that what they mistake for slothful repose and for a waste of time is so only in appearance, and that beneath this fancied inaction lies hidden a most perfect activity, which is able to produce excellent fruits of holiness. If this activity is more or less unconscious, especially at first, when we lack sufficient experience of it, it is because it escapes our attention by reason of its very spirituality and simplicity.

It would be to the point to make these souls, if they understand philosophy, ponder over that beautiful page in Bossuet

in which he explains to us how it is that the soul knows itself so little. "It is," he says, "because our soul, ceaselessly clothing itself in sensible images, with which it is entirely filled and wholly penetrated, does not distinguish itself from the body, only knowing itself by a confused sentiment, by consciousness, so to speak; and as a necessary consequence what it knows the least are its own acts, its intellectual movements. Why? Because it sees nothing except through this thick cloud of corporal objects which the senses unceasingly bring before it, whence the habit is formed of believing, in a way, that nothing is real but that which is felt or touched or handled; whence again it follows that when it is directed to pure intellection, as in the prayer of quiet, it escapes as it were from itself, thinks that it is acting no longer, *while in reality it is beginning to exercise its truest and most natural activities.* But little by little the soul, by dint of finding itself entirely wrapped up in itself, begins to disentangle itself experimentally from the body, and in the same way learns to separate its intellectual operations, in which its real action lies, from the senses."[1]

The *third* remedy aims at healing the distressing evil of distractions. We have said that in quiet the mystical suspension or ligature does not affect all the powers of the soul, but only one or two, the discursive intelligence and the will, or the will alone. What then happens to the other powers, especially the memory and the imagination? Do they favour or, on the contrary, trouble the quiet of the first? If it be hindered by their untoward incursions, we can foresee a painful trial. St Teresa, who had experienced it, does not forget to warn her daughters against a formidable temptation which God at times permits in order to put certain souls to the test. She earnestly recommends them to exercise patience, without doing violence to the rebel powers, so that in their turn they may be bound.

"We cannot stop the revolution of the heavens," she tells them, "as they rush with velocity upon their course, neither can we control our imagination. When this wanders we at once imagine that all the powers of the soul follow it; we think everything is lost, and that the time spent in God's presence is wasted. Meanwhile the soul is perhaps entirely united to him in the innermost mansions, while the imagination is in the precincts of the castle, struggling with a thousand wild and venomous creatures and gaining merit by its warfare. . . .

[1] *Instructions sur les états d'oraison*, bk. v, § 18.

"We should not be distressed by reason of our thoughts, nor allow ourselves to be worried by them: if they come from the devil, he will let us alone if we take no notice of them; and if they are, as often happens, one of the many frailties entailed by Adam's sin, let us be patient and suffer them for the love of God. . . . The thing is inevitable, therefore do not let it disturb or grieve you; but let the mill clack on while we grind our wheat, that is, let us continue to work with our will and intellect."[1]

However painful this trial may be for a loving soul, it will be but a passing phase if it is suffered with patience and humility, and the suspension will soon spread to the rebellious powers, and the sweet peace of quiet reign in that faithful soul.

We are now even better able to understand why it is that mystics have given to the prayer with which we are dealing the *expressive name of quiet*. In ordinary prayer or meditation, the soul is not at rest: it is active, it exercises itself. What, in fact, is this prayer but to reflect, to reason, to imagine, to call God to mind and to seek him with effort, to excite ourselves to love him, to lay our doubts before him, as a pupil before his master, to ask him to teach us, to help us, to console us: all this is an exercise and labour for the mind and heart.

On the contrary, to contemplate God, to feel his ineffable presence by a simple intuition and without effort, and then to enjoy it freely, with a love which wishes for nothing more than to rest in him, this is a foretaste of eternal rest. Those who have had the happiness to experience it once—and they are many—bear witness that the spiritual sweetness of this repose has nothing in common, either in degree or kind, with the other sweetnesses of ordinary prayer. "This prayer," says St Teresa, "is a supernatural state . . . here the soul rests in peace . . . all the faculties are calmed . . . the soul cannot decide with certainty what it enjoys, although recognizing the immense difference between this and all earthly pleasures . . . as it appears to me, all the joys of this life only reach the exterior of the will, or its rind as we may call it."[2]

Elsewhere in the same chapter (xxxi) the Saint has still better described the nature of this happiness. "This state," she says, "resembles a swoon, both interior and exterior, so that the [body] does not wish to move, but rests like a traveller

[1] *Int. Castle*, 4th M., ch i. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxi.

who, having nearly come to his journey's end, stops so that he may start again refreshed, for the strength of the soul is now double what it was. The body feels enjoyment, while the spirit is supremely satisfied and so delighted at finding itself near the fountain that, before even tasting the water, its thirst is quenched and there seems nothing left to desire. The faculties are reluctant to stir; all action seems to impede their loving God—yet they are not entirely lost, for they can and do realize, by peaceful contemplation, in whose presence they are. Two of them are free; the will alone is captive, and, if capable of feeling pain at the time, can only do so at the thought that it will regain its liberty. The mind centres itself on one thing only and works but little, and the memory tries to remember nothing else, for both see that this is ' the one thing needful.'. . . At times they shed a few tears; not sadly but with extreme sweetness."

God usually grants so great a happiness but *rarely* and *for a short time:* for instance, for some minutes, St Teresa tells us, or for the space of time of an *Ave Maria*.[1] Certain privileged souls, however, have enjoyed it more often; for such also it has been prolonged *partially* during their outward occupations in a kind of habitual semi-quiet lasting whole days. Let us hear how St Teresa has described this mystical state.

" Occasionally during the prayer of quiet God bestows on the soul another grace that is *difficult to understand* by anyone who has not experienced it. . . . When the quiet is great and lasts long I think the will must be held fast in some way, or such peace could not be protracted. Sometimes . . . it lasts for one or two days. . . . Souls raised to this degree of prayer . . . are conscious that their attention is not entirely given to whatever they may be doing, but that the chief factor—that is, the will—is wanting. I believe that it is united to God, leaving the other powers free to attend to his service. The latter are more apt than ever for this, but are dull and at times even imbecile concerning worldly affairs. . . . Thus the whole being serves him, for the will, while rapt in contemplation, works without knowing how, and the other two powers share Martha's labour—thus Martha and Mary toil together."[2]

[1] *Life*, ch. iv, vi. [2] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxi.

§ 2

A counterfeit of quiet : Quietism

Since shadow does but serve to bring out light, we must draw a comparison between the Catholic doctrine of quiet, which we have just explained, and the crude contortion of it known as Quietism. This will enable us to understand the former better, and an examination of the error into which others have imprudently fallen through the exaggeration of an uncontested truth, will prove no less interesting than instructive for the director of souls.

It would be useless to turn back at any length to the notorious *history* of Quietism in the seventeenth century. In its general tendency to repose, its lack of effort and its inaction, it was as old as humanity. In this it resembled Indian pessimism and all the pessimisms or nihilisms hatched throughout the ages in pagan philosophies. Their ideal was the annihilation of activity and of human personality in the bosom of God or the great All.

Among Christians we find the first traces of it in the fourth century in spiritual Origenism and in the book of *Maxims* of Evagrius, deacon of Constantinople. In the eleventh century it again appeared in a Greek sect of Mount Athos, called the Hesychasts, and in the thirteenth in that of the Beghards, but it was only in the seventeenth century that the error was quite clearly formulated, with much ostentation, by a Spanish priest of Saragossa, Miguel de Molinos, in his books entitled *The Spiritual Guide* (Rome, 1675) and *The Prayer of Quiet*, condemned by Innocent XI and publicly burnt in 1687. At the same time as his teaching, the writer was condemned on account of his immoral conduct and punished by imprisonment for life. He died in prison in 1696, at the age of sixty-nine, but Molinosism survived him.

After having been watered down, and above all purged of the immoral consequences involved in it, Quietism again appeared with Madame Guyon (Bouvier de la Mothe, born at Montargis in 1648) and with her director, Père François La Combe, Barnabite, of Geneva. This lady, who enjoyed a great reputation for piety and charity towards the poor, published her new Quietism in two small works: *Moyen court et très facile de faire oraison* (Grenoble, 1685), which was condemned in 1689, and *Les Torrents spirituels* (1720). She then

undertook a series of lectures in various dioceses, notably at Annecy and at Grenoble, whence she was driven by episcopal authority. In Paris, the archbishop, Mgr. de Harlay, obtained an order from the King to have Père La Combe arrested and Mme. Guyon placed in a convent, whence, however, she was set free, thanks to the protection of Mme. de Maintenon.

Bossuet in turn condemned the writings of Mme. Guyon, but Fénelon seemed to be more favourably disposed towards them. Whence the conferences of the two bishops at the seminary of St Sulpice at Issy, which ended in an agreement on thirty-four propositions. After this agreement, Fénelon published his *Maximes des Saints*, in which he thought he had sufficiently modified part of the quietist maxims to render them acceptable. But Bossuet and Louis XIV became concerned at these novelties, and Pope Innocent XII ended by condemning twenty-three propositions from the *Maximes des Saints*, without, however, declaring any of them to be heretical (March 12, 1699). The admirable submission of the Archbishop of Cambrai ended the dispute. Mme. Guyon, imprisoned in the Bastille, quitted it this same year and withdrew to Blois, where she died a pious death in 1717.

Let us pass on to examine the *teaching of the Quietists*. Their ideal of perfection for all Christians without distinction was passive contemplation, which is only the lot of certain privileged souls. But they went even further: perfection, according to them, consisted in total passivity, ending in the suppression of all our acts, replaced thenceforth by the simple operation of God. *Leave God to act*, such was their motto.

It flows logically from the false principle of Luther and Calvin concerning the total corruption of man through original sin. If all our acts are vitiated in their very source, then they must be suppressed. This was the Jansenist and Protestant error, which, in spite of all the condemnations by the Church, was again producing its poisonous fruit. Doubtless, the quietists of the seventeenth century did not dare openly to proclaim the condemned principle, but they still accepted its consequences.

They also deduced it from the new philosophical principles of Descartes and Malebranche, whence sprang Occasionalism and Ontologism.

In fact, if God is the only agent in nature, the only true cause, we ought not to attempt to act ourselves, but remain passive

beneath his action; *leave God to act!* Our eagerness for action must be a delusion and an evil.

On the other hand, if the intuition of God, direct and without any image, is natural to man, and therefore operating continuously in his mind, the permanent state of passive contemplation would be for him the ideal of perfection. Hence the distinctly anti-scholastic claim of Fénelon to consider mystical contemplation "something very simple, possessed of nothing miraculous," which could be prolonged throughout a lifetime, contrary to the formal assertions of St Thomas, of St Teresa, and of almost all Catholic theologians. Mystical contemplation would thus become a higher degree of Malebranche's vision of God, through which man would recover his true nature, becoming regenerate, as before the fall.

The Ontologism of Fénelon thus accounts to us for his semi-quietism, and far from disguising this close relationship between his new mystical and philosophical theories, he openly proclaims it in the curious passage which we quote.

"It is true," he admits, "that many mystics (the scholastics) supposed this contemplation to be miraculous, because a truth is contemplated which has not passed through the senses or the imagination. It is also true that these mystics have recognized a groundwork of the soul which operated in this contemplation without any distinct working of its powers. But these things only sprang from the philosophy of the schools, with which these mystics were prepossessed. All this great mystery fades away when it is granted, with St Augustine, that we have, without any miracle, intellectual ideas which have not come through the senses; and when it is granted that the groundwork of the soul is not really distinct from its powers. All passive contemplation is then reduced to something very simple, with nothing miraculous about it. It is a tissue of acts of faith and love, so simple, so direct, so peaceful and so uniform that they seem to be no more than one single act, or even no act at all, but a repose of pure union . . . one continuous act during a whole lifetime."[1]

After such a statement it is most difficult not to see that the theological Quietism of Fénelon is but the quintessence or the synthesis of all the new philosophical theories of the seventeenth century.

It is not difficult to *criticize* this spiritual passivity, even when shorn of its Jansenist heresy.

[1] Fénelon, *Maximes des Saints*, pp. 200-202.

First of all, it makes the mistake of assimilating the ordinary ways of asceticism or of Christian perfection to the extraordinary and exceptional ways of mysticism, which is a misleading generalization, for it makes the exception the general rule and takes the accident of the perfect life for the essence thereof.

Bossuet, in his energetic struggle with Quietism, was not slow to point out this confusion and to condemn "the false nature of those devotions by which directors desire to render the rare and higher leadings of God ordinary and common to many; preaching nothing so much as to leave God to act, to have a virtue without virtue, and a love without love."[1]

Doubtless, indeed, we must leave God to act when he wills to act alone, and it is for him to act alone. For instance, it is for him alone to send us into a state of ecstasy or vision, and in this we can do nothing. But in the ordinary way we can and should act. When God offers us his grace, it is so that we may co-operate generously therewith with all our strength.

To *leave God to act*, therefore, would be to presume to think that he will save us without our co-operation, and would be an unfaithfulness to grace. Passivity, then, is only good when used with discretion, in its proper time and place, and to apply it everywhere is to abuse it.

In the second place, the Quietists corrupt the very idea of this passivity by declaring it to be *habitual* and *absolute*. To leave God to act, and only God, without ever acting ourselves, is an absurdity, for by no longer acting at all we should become inert, like automata worked by a string, and therefore incapable of merit and virtue. Such, perhaps, may be the ideal of a perfect machine, but certainly is not that of human perfection. This false conception of passivity, again, would lead to the suppression of all Christian activity: prayer, sacraments, religious exercises, and so on, which would be the destruction of religion and of morality itself; for it would dispense us from good works, excuse our evil deeds—the grace of God *having failed* us in our falls—and would render us indifferent to all desire, even that of eternal salvation. It would be complete moral nihilism.

To sum up, *to leave God to act*, whilst we seek repose in absolute passivity, is not the ideal of perfection either for a man or for a Christian; still less is it a means of attaining to perfection, but rather to the *nirvana* of Buddhism. This

[1] *Œuvres*, édit. Lachat, vol. xix, p. 310.

" simplification " of the methods of the Christian life may seem to make them more " easy " and may appear very ingenious, but it is false and most dangerous: instead of tempering the character and elevating the heart, it runs the risk of enervating them, of letting them sink into spiritual sloth and become numbed by a false security.

This is, however, only a brief and very general criticism of all Quietisms; let us now pass to a rapid examination of particular systems.

It would take too long and would be of little use to our readers to study in detail the sixty-eight condemned propositions of Molinos. It will suffice to select and summarize the three principal theses.

First thesis of Molinos: " Every act is an imperfection, for God desires to act in us and without us. The ideal of perfection consists solely in immobility and the annihilation of our faculties, in a spirit of complete abandonment to the will of God " (Prop. 1-5). " Also perfect contemplation or prayer of quiet is a state in which the soul does not reason " [which is true]; " it reflects neither on God nor on itself, but receives passively the impression of grace without exercising any act and in an entire inactivity " (Prop. 57, 58, etc.).

We have already replied that there is here a manifest exaggeration of the role of God in the work of perfection and of salvation; for God cannot will that we should merit and be saved without ourselves. Again, there is a similar exaggeration of our impotence and passivity. A purely passive state would be a state of imbecility or of syncope: it would be a disease and not a perfection. We have also explained how the mystical suspension of the powers of the soul is only relative. This impotence as regards certain operations and certain objects can quite well be combined with a maximum of activity for other operations and another object. It is a fixity of spiritual activity rather than an absence of it.

Second thesis of Molinos: " In this state of passivity the soul, having surrendered its desire and its free will to God by an act of pure love, seeks nothing more: neither to correct its faults and to acquire the virtues of sanctity, nor to obtain salvation and heavenly beatitude. Desiring nothing more, it fears nothing, neither death, nor punishment, nor hell " (Prop. 7, 12).

But such a stoical indifference, extending even to our last end, far from being a perfection, is undoubtedly an evil, for

every being ought to tend to its end. It is therefore to counsel an act against nature itself, and one that is even practically impossible; for the instinctive desire for personal happiness cannot be uprooted from the heart of man. Thirst for happiness is even the only act which escapes our freedom of choice, and is accomplished by us, as it were, by destiny: all our liberty lies in the choice of means.

Third thesis of Molinos: " This act of passive contemplation, once produced, becomes continuous and cannot be repeated. It is forbidden to reiterate this act of love, and above all to produce others less perfect, such as acts of faith, hope, contrition, or the other virtues. No prayer, not even the *Pater noster*, which was not intended for perfect souls who have no longer their own free will " (Prop. 14). " From this time forward the use of the sacraments, the ceremonies of religion, the practice of good works become an indifferent matter " (Prop. 31-35, 60). " Unimportant also are impure imaginations and the most criminal actions performed during this state of contemplation in the inferior part of the soul. Active resistance to such temptations is useless " (Prop. 24-37, 41-53), " seeing that contemplation has rendered us impeccable " (Prop. 57).

Such teaching need not be discussed. It is absurd and pernicious. It suppresses good works and exercises of piety other than the quiet of passive contemplation; finally, it opens the door to every irregularity, for it excuses every passion among those who claim to be perfect. In fact, does it not reasonably follow—if the body is only distantly allied to the soul, as all seventeenth-century philosophy proclaims—that it may be put on one side when it hinders the soul in its quiet and sweet contemplation of God, and be abandoned to its passions ?

It is not, therefore, astonishing to find that a large number of Molinos' disciples, having abused the teaching of their master by giving themselves up to libertinism, drew down on themselves the rigours of the Inquisition.

This gross and licentious Quietism was obviously repudiated by Mme. Guyon and the holy Archbishop of Cambrai. They laid great stress on the disinterested motive of the *pure love* of God, which was but just mentioned by Molinos, and this was an excellent wrapping for the protection of the adulterated wares of passivity, summing up the method of Christian perfection in the very easy and convenient maxim: *leave God to act.*

Certainly the *pure love* of God is indeed the ideal of perfection, but it is necessary to understand it well, and above all not to take it in a sense that would no longer be human and would make it contrary to nature and impossible. In order to sum up in a few words its true theological idea, it will suffice to say that the two opposite motives, love of self or reward, and love of God or of moral good, may be combined in our actions in five different ways.

1. To act *alone* for the reward of heaven, to the *exclusion* of the good, is a servile and bad motive: it reverses the proper order.

2. To act for the reward, *without excluding* the good, is imperfect, though not bad.

3. To act for both together is simply good: it is very human.

4. To act for the good alone, without *excluding heaven*, is a perfect act of disinterested love.

5. Finally, to act for the good alone, to the positive *exclusion* of salvation, is contrary to order and is bad.

With the help of this simple outline, which sums up Catholic teaching, it will be more easy to put one's finger on the grievous exaggerations contained in the *Maxims of the Saints*. It will suffice to accentuate the five principal theories of the twenty-three condemned propositions.

1. " In the contemplative state of quiet or of union, the soul loses all fear of hell, all desire of heaven—in a word, all interested preoccupation " (Prop. 1, 2, 6). That it should forget to think of heaven is praiseworthy; but positively to renounce heaven and its last end is contrary to reason and forbidden. At most there might be a hypothetical and conditional renunciation—which is not a real one—for instance: *if* it were right or *if*, though impossible, God could will it. Again, so subtle and unnatural a sentiment could only be but transitory and in no way habitual. It is in this sense that we must understand the desire, heroic doubtless, but in practice impossible, of St Paul, to be anathema for his brethren, with the deep conviction that this could not be.

2. " The soul that is perfect may make the *absolute* sacrifice of its own salvation, and the director ought to permit and encourage such an act, by which one is contented with one's own damnation, because of its justice " (Prop. 12, 8, 9, 10). All this is contrary to nature, and divine grace elevates nature without destroying it.

3. " This *single* act of pure love constitutes the interior

life and is the *only* source of all merit " (Prop. 23), to the extent that " perfect souls have no need to exercise the other virtues " (Prop. 21). Which is as much as to say that there is but one virtue: which is not a simplification, but a mutilation of the dogma and moral teaching of the Church, according to which charity alone is not able to produce the acts of the other virtues, but only to stimulate them.[1]

4. " In incomplete prayer of quiet, in which there is opposition between the powers, the irregular acts of the lower powers are always blind and involuntary " (Prop. 14). Does not the love of passivity, in thus renouncing the struggle, seem here to seek to supplement the maxim *leave God to act*, with this other unforeseen maxim: leave the devil and our evil nature to act also? Is not so easy-going an inertia at least dangerous?

5. " The state of quiet may become so perfect and habitual as to render the help of other methods of prayer useless " (Prop. 16). For as it renders useless the other virtues (Prop. 21), all the more must it exclude all other methods of piety. Thus the most complete exclusiveness should be the crowning of Quietism.

These grave exaggerations appear to us to-day to be most unreasonable, in spite of the great piety and good intentions of their authors. But, if they no longer find serious defenders, their spirit or their tendency survives in a certain school of contemporary spirituality, which still places its ideal of perfection in passivity much more than in activity.

We refer to a renewal of *semi-quietism*, which has been long dormant in certain Catholic circles, and has recently been awakened, not without clamour, on the occasion of the honour paid to the Venerable Mère Marie de Sales Chapuis, and in certain organs of the so-called Salesian school.

Without going so far as to renew the errors of Mme. Guyon and the Quietists of the seventeenth century, certain formulas, at the least ambiguous, and—what is more serious still—certain doctrinal exaggerations have been adopted from them, which we think it useful to point out, grouping them under two principal theses.

I. The *first exaggeration* is that of *spiritual passivity*, which they constantly extol. They tell us especially of " passive " piety, of a " way of abandonment " to grace, of " receiving "

[1] *Cf.* St Thomas, I-II, q. lxiii, a. 3, and q. lxv, a. 3.

the virtues of our Lord, of "leaving God to act." This is the whole secret of their new method of simplified spirituality. We have already refuted this formula, *leave God to act*, the favourite one of the Quietists of every period, but we cannot insist too strongly on its danger and its ambiguity.

1. We have said that this maxim is true as regards those mystical states of contemplation which it is impossible for us to produce for ourselves, even in a very slight degree, states which God alone can produce in us. St Teresa impresses this upon us. "With the assistance of God's grace," she says, "we can help ourselves to a certain extent [in vocal or mental prayer]; not so in contemplation; this is beyond our natural powers, and he does all, for it is his work."[1] But to endeavour to transfer this involuntary passivity, peculiar to the extraordinary ways, to the domain of the ordinary ways, is contrary to common sense and is nonsense; it is to claim that the "rare and sublime leadings of God," as Bossuet calls them, ought to be ordinary and common to all—in a word, it is to confound the mystical with the ascetic, and in fact, the writers whom we have in view admit no essential distinction between them, but one of degree only: an error which we have already sufficiently refuted.

2. To this fundamental confusion is added an excessive distrust of man's powers and of action. Doubtless they no longer hold, with the Jansenists, that original sin has totally vitiated human nature and completely destroyed its freedom of choice, but they greatly exaggerate its feebleness and impotence. Instead of exclaiming with St Paul: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me": *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat;*[2] instead of thus stimulating zeal for great deeds and holy courage, they turn us away from them and hold us back, for fear of acting before having *felt*, with certainty, *the divine movement*. It is almost a condemnation of all initiative and all personal activity. Hearken to their discouraged and pessimistic tone: "How foolish am I! When God reserves it to himself to support me it is foolishness for me to try and act for myself; it is to fling myself out of his arms. . . . What do I know of the true needs of my soul? Or of what will heal it . . .? When I claim to act . . . it is but to heap up imprudences. . . . True piety is more simple. . . . Leave God to act."[3]

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxv. [2] *Phil.* iv 13.

[3] *La Vie intérieure simplifiée*, p. 212, edit. 1894. It is only fair to note that the author has retouched later editions.

3. This distrust of action and personal effort in general carries with it, as a consequence, distrust in even the most recommended of spiritual exercises, which are disdained or become strangely "simplified." No more discursive meditation, ending with resolutions for the day. These are declared to be useless or harmful. At most a vague resolution to "follow God," to follow his movements. No more examination of conscience with regard to thought, word, deed, and omission, but only as to the disposition of the heart to follow God. No further acts of penance, for "to love God is better than to bemoan one's sins," and "the best means of self-purification is love." For far greater reason regularity in those exercises of piety which may survive such a method and the praiseworthy regularity in our daily work and in our life in general, have no longer any meaning. Since we must wait for the "movement of God," we cannot fix his time in advance. . . .

4. The co-operation of man with the grace of God is thus "simplified" and reduced to next to nothing. This again is an exaggeration from which those writers do not seem to shrink who have not hesitated to express themselves thus: "What have I to do in response to this will of God? Nothing. God does all. I have but to yield myself, to abandon myself and leave him to act."[1] "Leave Jesus Christ to love God in us and for us, that is the only way."[2] "It is more perfect, more sweet, more fitting to leave ourselves to be upheld by Jesus."[3]

Again, they compare the mounting upwards of the soul to that of a balloon raised passively in the air by heat or by gas. But this is first a philosophical error, for divine causality, far from suppressing man's causality, has, on the contrary, the power and also the goodness to communicate to us, not only the appearances, but the reality of true causes, as St Thomas shows in so masterly a manner.[4] It is, furthermore, a theological error, for without positive and active co-operation on our side, it would be impossible for us to merit, to become virtuous and even saints.

Merit, virtue, sanctity, would mean no more than an outward cloak, clothing our malice or nakedness. External imputation and merely outward sanctity would replace inward holiness and justification. So that God could not succeed in rendering us inwardly good and holy, and his power or goodness would be found wanting. The new school does not seem to be

[1] *La Vie intérieure simplifiée*, pp. 180, 305, etc. [2] *La voie*, p. 9.
[3] *L'intimité avec Jésus*, p. 42. [4] I, qq. xxv and cv.

repelled by these consequences, when it interprets literally the words of the Ven. Mère Chapuis: "I have no virtue, but my Jesus has them all" (for me), or again when they declare that we must "receive" the virtues instead of producing them ourselves by the exercise of co-operation with the grace of God, which never fails us. Such metaphoric expressions, inexact as they are, are not inoffensive, for they may lead to the encouragement of spiritual sloth.

II. *A second series of exaggerations* which we must notice, has for its object the *abandonment of pure love*, which, in addition to being one of the forms of spiritual passivity, is also a kind of noble canopy of unselfishness, which covers it and makes it attractive. Here again, whilst it sets aside some of the errors of Mme. Guyon and Fénelon, the new school retains several others, or, to our mind, does not sufficiently repudiate them.

Doubtless it forbids holding, with Quesnel, that perfect charity is the only virtue, the only meritorious act, or the only gauge of all merit (Prop. 49-56)—although its forms of prayer, when taken literally, would sometimes let this be understood[1]—but it still exaggerates the role of charity on three important points.

1. This school holds that charity may suffice for a soul, not only in the next world, as all theologians admit, but also in this, so that acts of virtue flowing from another source, without being actually condemned, are practically useless. Now this appears to us to be very inexact. Even for perfect souls, other motives, and even fear, may, at least occasionally, have a very useful and even necessary role. In this we may believe the experience of St Teresa, who said to her excellent nuns, already far advanced in perfection: "Be not too confident . . . do not rely on your enclosure, on your penitential life, nor on your continual exercise of prayer and constant communion with God, nor trust in having left the world. . . . All this is good, but is not enough, as I have already said, to remove all fear; therefore meditate on this text and often recall it: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.*"[2] And did the great

[1] "Without charity nothing is of use; with it everything is of use towards salvation." "The whole life should begin and continue in charity, by charity and for charity. . . . All the rest is nothing (to God) without that." "The true and only measure of all merit is charity" (*La voie*, pp. 6, 16, 18).

[2] *Castle*, 3rd M., ch. i.

St Paul, who extolled charity so eloquently, after having been rapt to the third heaven, set aside or disdain to bring to his aid, sometimes, the motive of hope, he who avowed, in his humility, his fear of becoming reprobate after having preached to others: *Ne cum aliis praedicaverim ipse reprobus efficiar?*[1]

Nor should this motive be called the "fear of God" in a bad sense, for though there is a certain servile fear from which we should be preserved, yet there is also a filial fear from which it is very human to derive much help. Also, the Church has condemned the first proposition of the *Maxims of the Saints:* "There is a *habitual* state of love of God, which is pure charity, without any admixture of self-interest," and the twenty-third: "Pure love alone constitutes the interior life: it becomes the *sole* principle and the *sole* motive of all deliberate and meritorious actions."

If the sufficiency thus claimed for charity be not true, even for the perfect, all the more must this be so for those Christians who have just made a start or who are but beginning the interior life in the purgative and illuminative ways. It is here that the exclusiveness of the new method reaches the height of its paradox. All charity is not perfect in a soul at a bound, nor is it capable of producing all at once, and in all without distinction, the wonderful results of which we are told, especially the calming of the passions, detachment from sin, and the purification of the soul. When it is born in the soul, and even during its growth, charity is usually too feeble to suffice of itself or to supersede the other motives. Far from that, for its development and even for its preservation it has need of the help of other motives suggested by the love of concupiscence: such as submission to God, obedience to duty, fear of the justice of God, penance and expiation, the desire of heaven, and so on. In order to tame a fiery steed flattery and gentleness are not enough; spur and whip are needed. We have learnt this by universal experience; it is, therefore, all the more surprising to hear repeated such perversions as the following: "Charity is the principal and universal means of sanctification . . . it is a short and perfect way because it attains its goal at once."[2]

2. It is a similar exaggeration to say that charity is a *way*, for in itself it is an *end* to be reached and not a means. What is, in fact, the object or final end of the ascetic ways? It is

[1] This is also the teaching of St Thomas (II-II, q. xix, a. 6 and 10 *Cf.* q. iv, a. 3, and q. clxxxiii, a. 4).

[2] *La voie*, p. 15, etc., Part III.

Christian perfection, which consists in the union of the soul with God by perfect charity. If it is the end, why make a means of it? No doubt, the end once reached may in turn become a means. Thus health, which for a sick man is an end to be attained, may afterwards become a means towards greater improvement. For health thus attained brings greater appetite and better digestion, enables the patient to take more exercise and to continue to develop his health when once acquired. But it is laughable to conclude from this that health is the only prescription suitable for a sick man, and that the doctor has only to order it as the sole means of curing him. It is this method that our semi-quietists adopt in desiring to prescribe, as a universal and exclusive means, the exercise of charity, in order to attain to that charity which is lacking to them.

Perfect charity is only a means for those who have acquired it, and to the extent to which they have acquired it; but there must be also other means to acquire and to develop it. This was made quite clear by Pius VI, in condemning the twenty-fifth proposition of the Council of Pistoia: "In accordance with the ordinary order of preparation for justification, fear must first enter, in order that charity may penetrate afterwards: fear is the remedy, charity is health": *Opus esse, juxta consuetum ordinem praeparationis ad justitiam, ut intret timor primo, per quem veniat charitas: timor medicamentum, charitas sanitas.*

This teaching is textually that of Holy Writ: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom": *Initium sapientiae timor Domini.*[1] And this recalls to our minds the splendid reply given by his superior to Père Ravignan, who, in one of his trials, complained at not finding a word about love in the beginning of the exercises of St Ignatius: "Fear is the needle which first pierces, but the thread which should follow it is the golden thread of trustfulness and of divine charity."

Such is the providential order of things. Our semi-quietists forget original sin and fallen nature; they reason as though we were angels, and pure love were innate in our hearts. They are in heaven and we are on earth. . . . Here below, as St Francis de Sales has so well said, "sudden and perfect purification (such as that of St Paul, St Mary Magdalen, etc.) is entirely miraculous, and as extraordinary in the sphere of grace as is the resurrection from the dead in that of nature, so that we must not lay claim to it. Purgation and ordinary healing, whether of the body or of the mind, is only effected little by little,

[1] *Ps.* cx 10.

by a progressive advancement, slowly and painfully. . . . The exercise of the purification of the soul ought not to end, and cannot end but with life. . . ."[1]

3. A third exaggeration is the desire to push the pure and disinterested love of God to the extent of *indifference with regard to spiritual goods* and to what they call *annihilation*. In order to commend *indifference* with regard to certain gifts of God, such as spiritual consolations, they make an appeal to several of the maxims of St Francis de Sales; for instance, " ask nothing and refuse nothing," but they forget the proviso which the saintly Doctor added: " I mean concerning the things of earth,"[2] which is very different. He had in mind the good things of this world and not of divine grace. Our Lord himself, in giving us the *Pater noster*, teaches us to desire and also to ask for the good things of heaven, and even of earth, if they are useful towards salvation, as well as for deliverance from things evil.

We have already made our criticism concerning indifference regarding our own salvation. Supposing that God should really separate our final beatitude from his glory—an hypothesis which they say is *possible*, but which we believe to be impossible and chimerical; for the glory of God consists precisely in making happy and rewarding the good—they acquiesce in indifference to salvation and renunciation thereof.[3] We see in all this only exaggerated and finely pointed subtleties which, being contrary to nature, are full of danger.

The height of these pious exaggerations is *perfect annihilation*.[4] As if in human nature all, absolutely the whole, were vitiated and radically bad! This again goes too far. We must endeavour to annihilate, no doubt, what is incurably bad, but also to correct, transform and supernaturalise the remainder. To wish to annihilate all, even our legitimate desire for beatitude, is absurd and impious: it is to render legitimate the Buddhist *nirvana*.

And if, by way of objection, instances are cited of some holy mystics, who have had to pass through terrible temptations to despair and to the hypothetical abandonment of their eternal salvation, our answer is that these trials are but passing, not a fixed and normal state; above all we repeat, that this

[1] *Introduction to the Devout Life*, ch. v.
[2] *Spiritual Colloquies*, xxi.
[3] *La Vie intérieure simplifiée*, p. 30.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

assimilation or constant confusion between the mystical and the ascetic states, which would tend to lay down as general principles of the Christian life that which should only be applied to very exceptional particular cases, to certain souls raised above the ordinary ways of grace, is the fundamental error of Quietism as it is of semi-quietism. It is that species of sophism which logicians call *transitio de genere ad genus*.

Let us *end this criticism* with some more practical and less abstract considerations.

Even though the new school should succeed in mitigating the doctrinal errors which we have pointed out, or even in eliminating them by subtle distinctions, denials, or happy contradictions between theory and practice, there would still remain a general tendency which must be judged in the light of the welfare of souls and their needs at the present day. Granting that a modern preacher may more easily reach souls by laying greater stress on the love than on the fear of God, is it beneficial to preach only the love of God and to leave the divine justice with its rewards and chastisements in the shade? We do not think so, and the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in its recent *Instruction* (1894) to the bishops of Italy concerning *preaching*, has condemned this tendency most strongly as a "great abuse of sacred eloquence . . . whence," it adds, "the small result from such preaching, from which the man of the world goes away persuaded in his mind that, without changing his morals, he has but to say, *I believe in Jesus Christ*, in order to be saved." Furthermore, is it desirable, whilst preaching the excellence of divine charity, to speak only of the *affective* love felt in the heart, leaving in the shade the *effective* love which appeals to the will and directs it towards the practice of every virtue rather than towards passivity, abandonment, and quietude?

Once more, we do not think so. We see in this a tendency full of perils and facile illusions. It must enervate souls instead of strengthening them; it must encourage the spiritual sloth which finds it more convenient to exchange the violent effort needed for the practice of virtue, for the love of a barren joy, and for a charity entirely imaginative and sentimental. Thence a superficial and rose-water piety, replacing solid virtue by sentimental outbursts and by the fashionable affectations of the day. "The most perfect charity," says St Thomas, "is

not that which reposes on the bosom of God, but that which fulfils those things which are most difficult and troublesome."[1]

Dangerous as it is for all Christians, such a piety must be far more perilous for chosen souls, religious or sacerdotal, who receive Holy Communion daily. After some years of this slothful, passive piety, after some time spent in this deceptive languor, we should be fatally found to be as we were, with the same weaknesses, the same miseries, perhaps still more feeble and imperfect . . . in the midst of the most abundant religious aids; in spite of an enormous number of communions, of confessions, of sacraments received, and beneath floods of grace which day by day must have fallen in vain on our souls. Then we should be distressed and discouraged by this dreadful sterility . . . tempted by this fearful thought: *God was not there!* How great has been the number of priests and religious whose hearts have been hurled and broken against this rugged rock, who had resisted assaults far more violent in their life in the world! And, nevertheless, God was indeed there. But he was there to second our own efforts and not to dispense us from them; to help us in the struggle and not to enable us to triumph without a fight. His grace is an all-powerful lever which ought to multiply our efforts a hundredfold, but not take their place.

We consider, therefore, that the new ways of abandonment and passive spirituality which are proposed to us are at the least dangerous exaggerations, and that the traditional way of virile, austere, and active piety, in which sacrifice is welcomed, sought with filial confidence, and tempered by the consolations of divine charity, will produce far higher individual and collective effects. It is the royal way of the Cross, the only way that is apostolic and must conquer, and it alone is the truly Christian way.

And once again we must insist that all these dangerous novelties are due to a confusion between the active and passive, ordinary and extraordinary ways, between asceticism and mysticism. By means of this obliquity of vision, the devil, who is "the ape of God," would encourage souls to mimic mysticism in order to bring discredit on it through spurious imitation.[2]

[1] St Thomas, *In III*, d. xxix, q. i, a. 8.

[2] See the brilliant ironies of Fléchier: *Œuvres mêlées, Dialogues sur le quiétisme;* and of La Bruyère: *Dialogues sur le quiétisme* (édit. Hachette, 1895, in which all quotations from Quietist writers have been verified).

§ 3

The prayer of union

This second mansion in the mystical palace, which corresponds with the fifth of St Teresa, is called by her *prayer of union*, which expression seems at first to be somewhat obscure, for all mystical prayer tends to union of the soul with its God and brings about this union in different degrees and in divers manners. And so, in order to render this vague term more precise, certain contemporary writers have thought well to add an epithet and speak of *full* union. But here again there is, in our opinion, much ambiguity: the fulness of union is not completely realized until the last mansion—*i.e.*, in *spiritual marriage*.

The idea of the Saint in adopting this expression was simply to characterize it by its *dominant sentiment*, which is one of real and total union. Whilst the preceding prayer, although unitive in a lesser degree, was characterized rather by quiet and the sweet repose of the soul on the heart of God, and as the next following, still more unitive, is characterized by its dominant note, rapture or ecstatic union, in the prayer of which we are treating, according to the expression of St Francis de Sales, *the soul is drawn closely by means of union*.[1]

It is none the less most difficult to define this sentiment and this state of union for those who have not experienced it. We will therefore follow St Teresa step by step, when, in her endeavour to make us understand it, she compares this prayer with the preceding one.

" I believe," she says, " that in this case (quiet) [all] the powers of the soul are not united to God; but are absorbed and astounded at the marvel before them. . . . [But] the will must in some way be united with that of God."[2]

Thus, in quiet, the will alone is united and is sensible of this union. The other powers, memory and understanding, are as though benumbed in a gentle sleep.

" Do not imagine," adds St Teresa, " that this state of prayer [that of union] is, like the one preceding it, a sort of drowsiness (I call it *drowsiness* because the soul seems to slumber, being neither quite asleep nor wholly awake). In the prayer of union the soul is asleep, fast asleep, as regards the world and itself. . . .

[1] *Treatise on the Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. xii.
[2] *Castle*, 4th M., ch. ii.

In fact, it has died entirely to this world, to live more truly than ever in God. This is a delicious death, for the soul is deprived of the faculties it exercised while in the body: delicious because (although not really the case) it seems to have left its mortal covering to abide more entirely in God. So completely does this take place, that I know not whether the body retains sufficient life to continue breathing; on consideration, I believe it does not; at any rate, if it still breathes, it does so unconsciously. The mind entirely concentrates itself on trying to understand what is happening, which is beyond its power; it is so astounded that, if consciousness is not completely lost, at least no movement is possible. . . ."[1]

In this state, then, the soul is "wide awake in God." It has a clear vision and an intimate sense of its union with God, not only to the full extent of its will, but through all the powers of the soul, understanding and memory. God permits these powers to realize the great things that he is working within them, whilst leaving them in ignorance of the method of this mysterious operation. This *how* remains incomprehensible. Our Saint declares it many times over: "If we did not see it, how can we feel so sure of it? That I do not know."[2] And time and again she dissuades her sisters from a useless seeking out of vain curiosity. "In all such matters," she says, "we must not seek to know how things happened; our understanding could not grasp them, therefore why trouble ourselves about the subject? It is enough to know that it is he, the all-powerful God, who has performed the work."[3]

We must rest content, therefore, with the *description* which St Teresa gives us of this state of union, endeavouring to penetrate a little into its essential character.

"Let us now speak," she says, "of the sign which proves the prayer of union to have been genuine. As you have seen, God then deprives the soul of *all* its senses that he may the better imprint in it true wisdom: it neither sees, hears, nor understands [with its natural faculties] anything while this state lasts, which is never more than a very brief time; it appears to the soul to be much shorter than it really is. God visits the soul in a manner which prevents its doubting, on returning to itself, that it dwelt in him and that he was within it, and so

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. i.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*

firmly is it convinced of this truth that, although years may pass before this favour recurs, the soul can never forget it nor doubt the fact. . . .

"But, you may ask, how can a person who is incapable of sight and hearing see or know these things? I do not say that she saw it at the time, but that she perceives it clearly afterwards, not by any vision but by a certitude which remains in the heart which God alone could give. I know of someone [herself] who was unaware of God's being in all things by presence, power, and essence, yet was firmly convinced of it by a divine favour of this sort. She asked an ill-instructed priest of the kind I mentioned to tell her in what way God dwelt within us: he was as ignorant on the subject as she had been before our Lord revealed to her the truth, and answered that the Almighty was only present in us by grace. Yet so strong was her conviction of the truth learnt during her prayer that she did not believe him, and questioned other spiritual persons on the subject, who confirmed her in the true doctrine, much to her joy. Do not mistake and imagine that this certainty of God's having visited the soul concerns any corporal presence such as that of our Lord Jesus Christ who dwells in the Blessed Sacrament, although we do not see him: it relates *solely to the divinity*. If we did not see him, how can we feel so sure of it? That I do not know; it is the work of the Almighty, and I am certain that what I say is the fact. I maintain that a soul which does not feel this assurance has not been united to God entirely."[1]

This important passage, which we have abstained from interrupting by any comment, calls for *three remarks* on those words which we have printed in italics.

Firstly, in mystical union it is a question of the suspension and union of *all* the interior powers of the soul without exception, whereas in quiet the suspension and union were incomplete: one power only, the will, was able to unite with God, whilst the others were free to wander and express themselves. The suspension itself was in quiet rather a slumber and repose than a ligature or absolute impossibility of action.

Secondly, our Saint insists most strongly that the union of our powers relates *solely to the divinity*, and in no way to any corporal object, such as the sacred humanity of our Lord, nor to anything spiritual though created, such as sanctifying grace: again, she also states—and in this all

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. i.

theologians are unanimous—that in exceptional cases this great favour may be given, and has in fact been given, to certain privileged souls deprived of the state of grace, but whom God had willed to convert and transform into vessels of election.

But, according to St Teresa, this uniting of our soul " solely with the divinity " is a question of " essence operating with essence," this " supreme Majesty being united to the essence of the soul " to the point that, " by approaching only a little nearer, it would become, through union, one therewith." It is this that only happens in the final mansion: " the soul, I mean the spirit (or *apex*) of this soul, is made one with God."[1]

A little further on she adds that so intimate a union could not take place without a kind of participation: " If, as David says, ' With the holy thou shalt be holy,' doubtless by its becoming one with the Almighty, by this sovereign union of spirit with spirit, the soul must gather strength."[2] And it is thus that she explains the supernatural power of several mystical saints, such as St Francis of Assisi.

Thirdly, our Saint explains for us which of the five spiritual senses of our soul it is through which this experimental knowledge of God's presence operates. She assures us that it is not by a vision properly so-called, and if occasionally she uses the word *vision*, she at once stops to explain: " Understand that when I say ' You will see God,' I mean in the manner described, in which he manifests himself in this kind of union."[3] In fact, she has already formally stated that in this mansion " the soul neither sees nor hears." The supernatural senses of sight and hearing, therefore, are definitely excluded: they should indeed only be awakened in the two final mansions. Of the five spiritual senses, then, there remain only touch and those still more obscure forms of touch, taste and odour, by which we become aware of the presence of certain objects by their savour or perfume. But these last two belong rather to quiet and account for its delight and rapture. There thus remains *spiritual touch* properly so-called.

Very obscure in quiet, this becomes more distinct in union, and is enlightened to the extent that St Teresa is tempted almost to call it a vision, so clearly does it reveal its object. And has not this touch itself been the cause of our experiencing the presence of God in our souls by his power and very essence,

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. ii.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. iv.
[3] *Ibid.*, 5th M., ch. ii.

and quite otherwise than through sanctifying grace? The illumination of the mind by this interior touch is truly marvellous; in the same way that those who are born blind obtain knowledge by passing the fingers over books printed in relief, so we are able to find ourselves suddenly taught, by the aid of this sense, the secrets of the knowledge of God.

Let us go still further and ask of St Teresa if this mysterious touch of souls is *active* or *passive*. That of the blind man reading from braille is certainly active: he seeks and finds, he spells slowly by his own effort. It is altogether different in the ways of mysticism. Here we have no more effort, no more fingering; we do not teach ourselves, we are taught, and we are so taught, not in the measure of our application or of our intelligence, but in the measure in which it pleases God to reveal himself to us.

St Teresa also, following Dionysius, makes use of the comparison of a seal or stamp which God impresses upon us. "He desires," she explains, "that, without knowing how, the spirit should come forth stamped with his seal, for indeed it does no more than does the wax when impressed with the signet. It does not mould itself, but need only be in a fit condition—soft and pliable; even then it does not soften itself, but must merely remain still and submit to the impression. How good thou art, O God! All is done for us by thee, who dost but ask us to give our wills to thee that we may be plastic as wax in thy hands."[1]

This divine touch brings with it that invincible certitude which is the ordinary characteristic of all other kinds of touch. To be able to say, "I touch it with my finger," or, "I hold it," is still more certain and more convincing as to the presence of an object than the simple testimony of sight, for only to have seen it is to remain subject to many more illusions. Moreover, we have just quoted St Teresa as saying: "I maintain that a soul which does not feel this assurance has not been united to God entirely, but only by one of its powers, or has received one of the many other favours God is accustomed to bestow on men." And our Saint underlines this categoric declaration by adding: "I am assured that I state here what is true."[2]

The following are the *reasons for this teaching*, over and above her own experience, upon which St Teresa has firmly con-

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch ii. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. i.

structed it. " In the prayer [of quiet]," she says, " until the soul has had considerable experience, it doubts what really happened to it. ' Was it nothing but fancy, or was it a sleep ? Did it come from God or from the devil, disguised as an angel of light ?' The mind feels a thousand misgivings, and well for it that it should, because, as I said, nature may sometimes deceive us in this case. Although there is little chance of the poisonous reptiles entering here, yet agile little lizards [tiresome thoughts] will try to slip in. . . . However active these lizards may be, they cannot enter the fifth mansion, for neither the imagination, the understanding, nor the memory [being suspended] has power to hinder the graces bestowed on it. I dare venture to assert that, if this is genuine union with God, the devil cannot interfere nor do any harm, for his Majesty is so joined and united with the essence of the soul, that the evil one dare not approach, nor can he even understand this mystery. This is certain, for it is said that the devil does not know our thoughts, much less can he penetrate a secret so profound that God does not reveal it even to us. Oh, blessed state, in which the cursed one cannot injure us !"[1]

Such reasoning appears to us to be conclusive. In the immediate contact with a given object, illusion can only spring from the imagination, the memory, or from some other faculty. But if all are suspended, they cannot be accused of leading us into error. Neither can the illusion come from the devil, who has no power to place himself between the soul and God: when " his Majesty is so united with the essence of the soul," the accursed one can find no place there.

Thus the total suspension of our faculties in God prevents all illusion: and here we have a test of the highest importance in mystical theology, which we owe to the genius of St Teresa. It is enough to have made certain that there has been a total suspension of the powers during a given time, which is always of very short duration—that is to say, that the soul " has neither seen, heard nor understood " anything of earthly things whilst it was " wide awake in God."

The whole of this teaching as to the nature of the prayer of union can be summed up in the following definition: " It is a most intimate union of the soul with God, produced by a true and undoubted contact with the divine reality which dwells within us. It is prepared for by the complete suspension

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. i.

of the interior powers and followed by a sense of absolute certitude in the truth of this ineffable meeting."

Still, this inability to doubt, as also this total suspension of the powers, are *interior* and subjective *tests* more easy to be certified by the contemplative himself than by his director. The latter, in order to satisfy his judgement and decide if the soul is really favoured with the prayer of union, has the need for *outward tests* more manifest to him and more tangible.

Above all, he should make certain if the person in question is worthy of credence and whether he is sufficiently advanced in perfection as to render at least likely so great a favour, one which God in the ordinary way never grants to beginners. Souls which are as yet novices in the mystical ways are subject, by their very lack of experience, to many mistakes. At the first sense of interior sweetness which they experience, they easily imagine that they have reached the state of union. Not having as yet made a comparison of the different states, it is not astonishing to find that they confuse them. It is the role of the wise director to explain the differences and to correct their mistake.

This " interior sweetness " itself requires to be controlled by the director, for it may be counterfeited by the devil and have for its object " vanities " and not things divine. St Teresa will here again instruct us from her great experience.

" There are indeed [other unions]—not with God, but with vanities—when the devil transports the soul passionately addicted to them, but the union differs from that which is divine, and the mind misses the delight and satisfaction, peace and happiness of divine union. These heavenly consolations are above all earthly joys, pleasure, and satisfaction. As great a difference exists between their origin and that of worldly pleasures as between their opposite effects, as you know by experience. I said somewhere that the one seems only to touch the *surface* of the body, while the other penetrates to the very *marrow :* I believe this is correct, and I cannot express myself better."[1]

The " interior sweetness " may thus be an adulterated draught, and it is for the director to know how to distinguish whether it be heavenly and true or vain and false.

Once this preliminary examination is ended favourably, there still remains to be shown if it produces at least some of the *effects* habitual to it, before coming to a final decision as to the

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. i.

reality of the union—such effects, for instance, as jubilation and spiritual exaltation, mystical sleep, transformation of the soul, and so forth, effects which are also produced in still greater degrees by the higher modes of union.

Let us add a few words on these different signs, which will complete our notion of the state of mystical union by a description of its effects or the results which are the fruit of it.

1. *Mystical jubilation*, which is also called *spiritual inebriation*, is placed by a large number of writers, amongst whom is M. Ribet, between quiet and full union. St Teresa only speaks of it, on the contrary, in connection with ecstatic union. On the one hand it is considered as a preparation, and on the other a consequence of union. Whence arise hesitation and obscurity which, in our opinion, are more apparent than real. In fact, nothing prevents it from being at the same time an effect of the first union and a preparation for more perfect unions, and it is this wider view which we prefer. We even think that all somewhat intense and sweet divine action is able to induce it in different degrees.

It would seem that this conscious meeting, this ineffable contact of a soul with the divine reality which dwells in its midst, granted that they are real, cannot be accomplished, above all for the first time, without it experiencing tremors, transports, exaltation, and excesses which might be compared—crudely, no doubt, for all rigorous comparison fails us—to those emotions which accompany partial intoxication.

There are even more violent transports, such as those so often observed in St Francis of Assisi, St Philip Neri, St Joseph of Cupertino, St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, and many other holy mystics, whose jubilation or spiritual inebriation showed itself outwardly in actions which astonished and even scandalized the weak and ignorant. Such were their sighs, cries, ardent and broken exclamations, abundant tears, and even laughter, songs, improvised hymns, tremors agitating every limb, leapings, impetuous movements, the violent outward expression of enthusiasm and love, often accompanied with a rapid increase in the beating of the heart which cold water could not calm—in a word, a veritable delirium of joy and gladness.

Happy delirium! Divine extravagance! "O happy folly, sisters!" cried St Teresa, who had experienced it; "would that God might let us all share it!"[1]

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. vi

" It is now some five or six years, I believe," she tells us in her *Life*, " since our Lord raised me to this state of prayer, in its fulness, and that more than once—and I never understood it, and never could explain it; and so I was resolved, when I should come thus far in my story, to say very little or nothing at all." But this scruple left her, and in what poetic strains does she speak of it to-day: " It is a glorious folly, a heavenly madness, wherein true wisdom is acquired; and to the soul a kind of fruition most full of delight. . . . O my God, what must that soul be when it is in this state ? It wishes it were all tongue, in order that it may praise our Lord. It utters a thousand holy follies, striving continually to please him by whom it is thus possessed. I know one who, though she was no poet, yet composed, without any preparation, certain stanzas, full of feeling, most expressive of her pain; they were not the work of her own understanding; but, in order to have a greater fruition of that bliss which so sweet a pain occasioned her, she complained of it in that way to God. She was willing to be cut to pieces, soul and body, to show the delight she felt in that pain. . . . This my soul longs to be free—eating is killing it, and sleep is wearisome . . . it seems to be living contrary to nature, for now it desires to live not in itself, but in thee. . . . The joy is so great that the soul seems now and then to be on the very point of going forth out of the body; and what a blessed death that would be !"[1]

The anonymous person of whom our Saint here speaks is none other than herself; and among the fragments of her poetry which remain to us we are able to recognize the celebrated verses in which each stanza ends with the refrain: *I die because I cannot die!* It is a poem of ravishing beauty, which cannot be read without deep emotion, that transports one far from this earth into celestial regions.

Before looking on these apparently excessive manifestations of divine love as imperfections, an inexperienced director would do well to read over again this teaching of St Teresa, or the chapter in the *Imitation* on the *marvellous effects* of this love: *Amor modum saepe nescit, sed supra omnem modum fervescit*"— " True love knows no measure: its fervour overflows all measures." This is a natural effect of its ardour and sincerity.[2]

Nevertheless, let us hasten to observe that this " happy delirium and divine extravagance " are not essential to spiritual

[1] *Life*, ch. xvi and xvii. [2] Book iii, ch. v, n. 4.

inebriation, which may often be much more outwardly restrained and make much less noise, whilst becoming apparent through acts of heroic virtue. Such was the inebriation of St Andrew at the sight of the cross prepared for his suffering, of St Ignatius the martyr on hearing the roaring of the savage beasts which were to devour him, of St Apollonia casting herself into the flames at the stake, of St Lawrence, St Vincent, or St Pionius in the midst of their torments.

The inebriation, when thus restrained, and remaining principally interior, offers no danger to the perfection of the souls which it transports: they may freely surrender themselves to it without any other precaution than an increase of humility, of distrust in their own strength, and the desire for solitude which hides them from the public gaze.

The inebriation which overflows outwardly, on the contrary, carries with it greater perils and requires more watchfulness on the part of the director, above all as regards such as are of very impressionable and ardent temperament, or whose vanity inclines them to make themselves noticed. Women especially are much to be suspected in this, although it is an exaggeration to think that they are always vain and deceitful. Moreover, it is not only humility which is in danger from such favours, but also health, which would soon become exhausted by a too frequent repetition of these moral and nervous disturbances.

That is why St Teresa often warns her sisters against a desire for these extraordinary gifts. She tells them never to covet them, not even the gift of tears. Still less should they make an effort to provoke them, but rather turn their attention to some other subject when there is danger of surrendering to them immoderately.

Let us hearken to her wise counsel:

" Tears, though a good sign, do not always indicate perfection. Humility, mortification, detachment, and other virtues are the safest: there is no cause for fear. . . ."[1] " You must also notice that bodily weakness may cause such pain, especially with people of sensitive characters who cry over every trifling trouble. . . . The cause may be an accumulation of humour round the heart, which has a great deal more to do with such tears than has the love of God. Such persons seem as if they would never stop crying: believing that tears are beneficial, they do not try to check them nor to distract their minds from the subject, but encourage them as much as possible. The devil seizes this opportunity of weakening nuns so that they

[1] *Way*, ch. xvii.

become unable to pray or to keep their Rule. . . . Let us not fancy that if we cry a great deal we have done all that is needed—rather we must work hard and practise the virtues: that is the essential—leaving tears to fall when God sends them, without trying to force ourselves to shed them. Then, if we do not take too much notice of them, they will leave the parched soil of our souls well watered, making it fertile in good fruit: for this is the water which falls from heaven. However we may tire ourselves in digging to reach it, we shall never get any water like this."[1]

2. *Mystical sleep* is a normal reaction from spiritual inebriation after it has reached its height. Nevertheless, it is also found to follow other somewhat vivid divine actions, and even after the prayer of quiet when it is carried to a high degree. St Teresa specially notes this in her first letter (1576) to Father Rodrigo Alvarez, her director, as well as in the *Interior Castle*.[2] Many mystics, and these not the least, such as St John of the Cross, Alvarez de Paz, Scaramelli, go so far as to class mystical sleep as a special degree of contemplation, intermediate between union and ecstasy. This shows how true it is that theologians should avoid formulating too rigid boundaries which the sovereign freedom of the gifts of God will easily burst asunder.

However this may be, here is what there is to be said concerning the nature of mystical sleep and its essential difference from corporal sleep.

Whilst physical sleep, after having deadened all the outward and inward senses, also totally suspends, if it be profound, the imagination, the memory, the judgement, the reason, and consciousness, and reduces the spiritual life to nothing, mystical sleep only lulls the natural faculties of the soul to keep them awake in God. It is a literal realization of the words of the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles: " I sleep, but my heart watcheth "; so that it has all the beneficent and restoring physiological effects of corporal sleep, without interrupting, at any rate completely, the supernatural life of the soul, which continues to be united to God at least as regards the heart, and perhaps also, in a more or less vague manner, as regards the mind. Hence there are certain degrees in the more or less conscious state of this soul. But we can hardly believe, although it has been stated, that this consciousness may be at the same time totally extinguished and remain a gift of God. If we " no

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. vi. [2] *Ibid.*, 4th M., ch. iii.

longer think of anything," how can we say that "the heart watches"? St Teresa, whom we shall presently quote, ridiculed this illusory notion, which mistakes a fainting fit for an ecstasy and a state of prayer. All that can be granted is, that in profound mystical sleep the soul loses the sense of itself and its state, yet without losing the sense of the beloved object to which it remains united; or, to put it in philosophic language, it may lose the reflex consciousness of itself without losing the direct consciousness of its object.

From this spring three essential differences from natural sleep. (1) In mystical sleep one thinks of God, in the other of nothing. (2) After the first, on waking, at least some remembrance is retained; in the other, one remembers nothing. (3) Moreover, the one is passive, beneath the action of God, whereas the other is only a pure reaction of a physiological nature.

As Père Poulain has so well said: "[mystical sleep] is not a special state of prayer, but the mingling of two states; in one the drowsiness is natural, and the other supernatural."[1]

Different as they are by nature, these two sleeps are not less so in their *effects*. The function of divine sleep is to rest, to bring peace to, and to strengthen the soul, thus enabling it to make greater sacrifices. It quits this mysterious state invigorated, refreshed, animated with a new life in which it feels itself irresistibly drawn towards things above and repelled by things below. The life of the body almost always finds therein an increase of strength or, at least, loses nothing of its vigour. On the contrary, pathological drowsiness, swooning, benumbs the mind, empties it of holy thoughts, or even of all thought; furthermore, its frequency rapidly exhausts the body. The devil also often profits by it to trouble the imagination, to over-excite the senses and sensible desires, and to inspire a distaste for the things of God.

Consequently, if after an abnormal sleep the body feels tired out and the soul a prey to anxiety and uneasiness, by which it loses its peace and is inclined to tepidity, and by which the heart as well as the head becomes fatigued, it is impossible to doubt that such a sleep has nothing divine about it, that it is an accident of nature or a snare of the devil. It must, therefore, be striven against.

If, on the contrary, after repeated examination it is found to be good and profitable; if, again, it is quite proved to be of a passive character—that is, if the soul clearly feels that it is able neither

[1] *Graces of Interior Prayer*, p. 227.

to produce it nor to prevent it—it has but to yield to the divine attraction and to fall asleep in peace like a child within the arms of God. And what is there to fear for a soul which reposes on the heart of God?

We now come to the *wise counsels* of St Teresa to which we have referred:

"I wish to warn you here of a special danger to which those who practise prayer are subject, particularly women, whose weakness of constitution makes them more liable to such mistakes. On account of their penances, prayers, and vigils, or even merely because of debility of health, some persons cannot receive spiritual consolation without being overcome by it. On feeling any interior joy, their bodies being *languid and weak*, they fall into a slumber—they call it spiritual sleep—which is *a more advanced stage of what I have described;* they think the soul shares in it as well as the body, and abandon themselves to a sort of intoxication. The more they lose self-control, the more do their feelings get possession of them, because the frame becomes more feeble. They fancy this is a trance and call it one, but I call it nonsense; it does nothing but waste their time and injure their health.

"This state lasted with a certain person for eight hours, during which time she was neither insensible, *nor had she any thought of God.* She was cured by being made to eat and sleep well, and to leave off some of her penances. Her recovery was owing to someone who understood her case. . . .

"It should be known that when God bestows such favours on the soul, although there may be languor both of mind and body, it is not shared by the soul, which feels great delight at seeing itself so near God, nor does this state ever continue for more than a very short time. Although the soul may become absorbed again, yet, as I said, unless already feeble, the body suffers neither exhaustion nor pain. I advise any of you who experience the latter to tell the Prioress, and to divert your thoughts as much as possible from such matters. The Superior should prevent such a nun from spending more than a very few hours in prayer, and should make her eat and sleep well until her usual strength is restored, if she has lost it in this way. If the nun's constitution is so delicate that this does not suffice, let her believe me when I tell her that God only calls her to the active life. There must be such people in monasteries."[1]

[1] *Castle*, 4th M., ch. iii.

We regretfully abridge the quotation from a passage so wonderfully stamped with practical no less than theoretical wisdom. What an intimate harmony is here seen between common sense and sense divine!

3. The essential mark of mystical union, and the only one that cannot be replaced, the absence of which is an unanswerable and decisive proof of illusion, is the *spiritual transformation* of the soul which believes itself to be thus favoured. And this transformation must be the more perfect the higher the extent of the union. All theologians are unanimous on this primary point: the tree is known by its fruits; now fruits of holiness always result from the divine action in the soul. From them we recognize with certainty the hand of God, who alone is able to sanctify, for nature cannot do so and the devil never desires to.

If, therefore, it is shown that this soul has certain personal anxieties, such as either to produce of itself this spiritual inebriation, this sleep, or other mystical transports, or to draw the attention of others towards itself or to make itself noticed, the director must at once mistrust it, for such seekings, more or less vain and self-interested, are the opposite of holiness. Moreover, true mystical favours, being passive, cannot in any way be the fruit of our effort and labour.

But, on the contrary, if the contemplative soul become thereby more humble, more fervent, and more faithful to the practice of the virtues; if it be found to be more generous, even to the point of heroism; if this sacred contact with the divinity has convinced it by evidence that God is its sole object, its centre, its life, its all, and that the rest is but vanity and nothingness; if, again, to these outward signs be added those inward ones of which we have spoken, especially the passivity and total suspension of the powers of the soul, producing certainty and impossibility of doubt as to the reality of the union with God in the deepest recesses of itself; then there is no longer any room for doubt: the work carries with it the impress of the divinity of its Author, and it may be believed.

St Teresa compares this transformation of the soul to that of a silkworm which leaves its tomb transformed into a white butterfly of charming beauty: "The silkworm symbolizes the soul . . . as soon as, by means of this prayer, the soul has become entirely dead to the world, it comes forth like a lovely little white butterfly. Oh, how great God is! How

beautiful is the soul after having been immersed in God's grandeur and united closely to him for but a short time! Indeed, I do not think it is ever as long as half an hour. Truly, the spirit does not recognize itself, being as different from what it was as is the white butterfly from the repulsive caterpillar. It does not know how it can have merited so great a good, or rather, whence this grace came which it well knows it merits not. The soul desires to praise our Lord God and longs to sacrifice itself and die a thousand deaths for him. It feels an unconquerable desire for great crosses and would like to perform the most severe penances; it sighs for solitude and would have all men know God, while it is bitterly grieved at seeing them offend him. . . . It knows not where to stay nor take its rest; everything on earth disgusts it after what it has experienced, particularly when God has often given it this wine which leaves fresh graces behind it at every draught. It despises the work it did while yet a caterpillar—the slow weaving of its cocoon thread by thread—its wings have grown and it can fly; could it be content to crawl?"[1]

§ 4

Prayer of ecstatic union

This third phase of mystical prayer corresponds with the Sixth Mansion of the Interior Castle of St Teresa. Does it differ greatly from the last?

Considered merely from the point of view of the closeness of union, the two kinds of contemplative prayer differ only in degree. This is what St Teresa had in mind when she said: "The next mansion (ecstatic union) [is] of the same nature: yet in a more advanced state the effects are far stronger."[2]

Nevertheless, if the manner of this union be also considered it is not difficult to discover very important *specific differences*. St Teresa herself admits it. Rapture, she says, "is more excellent than union, the fruits of it are much greater, and its other operations more manifold."[3]

The most manifest difference, of which St Thomas himself makes a specific distinction, is the *complete estrangement of the senses*.[4] Whilst in simple union the senses are more or less asleep, and awake if disturbed; in ecstasy, on the contrary, they are totally suspended, or rather in a state of anæsthesia,

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. ii. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Life*, ch. xx.
[4] St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxv, a. 1.

to such an extent that even violent disturbance will not arouse them. The hand of an ecstatic engaged in prayer may be approached with the flame of a candle, without his feeling the least pain. Moreover, the etymological meaning of the word *ecstasy*, ἔκστασις, *extra stare*, sufficiently denotes it. There is *alienation* of all sensitive life, or life of relation, as though the soul were no longer in the body: to such an extent that philosophers and theologians have asked themselves whether, for example, the soul of St Paul, during his ecstasy, did really cease to animate his body. St Thomas answers the question in the negative;[1] but he discusses it seriously. The alienation of the senses appears to him to be a sufficient explanation: *Paulus in raptu fuit alienatus a sensibus*. It is enough to say that the soul then becomes incapable of producing any conscious or sensible operation in the body.

Nevertheless, this total suspension of the sensitive life does not altogether carry with it that of the vegetative life. The functions of nutrition, breathing, circulation of the blood, and so on, although enfeebled, continue without consciousness. If certain ecstatics have been able to pass weeks and months without taking nourishment, it is not in virtue of the ecstatic state—which, moreover, is very short—but is due to one of those numerous accidental wonders of which ecstasy is the occasion, and of which we shall speak in due place in the second part of this study. Such, for instance, are the marvels of levitation, the luminous halo, mystical perfumes, stigmatizations, wounds, corporal as well as spiritual, which pierce the heart, etc.

Occasionally total alienation of the senses is only a secondary phenomenon, an outward effect, an echo, as it were, of the more wondrous inward marvels. Of the five spiritual senses of the soul, the most obscure, touch, with its less instructive derivatives taste and odour, were our only guides in quiet and in union, but here the more enlightening and more interesting senses of *spiritual sight and hearing* begin to be awakened, to complete the knowledge and the rapture of the mind and heart. But such light cannot be contemplated, nor can such transports be borne by earthly man, without a complete alienation of the senses. Such is the formal teaching of St Thomas.

" St Paul," he tells us in conclusion, " rapt to the third heaven, contemplated the divine essence. But it is impossible for a man, in the present state, to contemplate the essence of God, if he be not estranged from the senses ": *Paulus usque ad*

[1] St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxv, a. 5.

tertium coelum divina virtute raptus, Deum per essentiam vidit. Impossibile est quod homo in statu viae videat Deum per essentiam sine abstractione a sensibus."[1]

If, however, the senses fade away, the human understanding, on the contrary, upheld and transformed by divine grace, must be completely awake for this sublime contemplation. And, therefore, the human will, in the ecstatic state, in no way loses its freedom, for it does not lose the concurrence of the understanding. The contemplative act, although passive, is therefore *voluntary and meritorious*, but indirectly, by compliance with an ineffable love.

It is true that in this state the soul can no longer sin—at least while it lasts—but liberty to sin is not of the essence of freedom. This liberty is only transfigured, like that of the blessed in heaven, which the beatific vision, far from destroying, makes fully perfect.

This single point is enough to differentiate clearly between ecstatic suspension of the senses and natural sleep or certain cataleptic states. In these states one thinks of nothing, and there is a momentary loss of the use of reason, and therefore no more freedom, no more remembrance on waking, for the annihilation of thought cannot be an object of memory.

But we must not anticipate, and so reserve the comparison and contrast between the ecstatic state and divers states more or less physiologically analogous, both natural and morbid, until the second part of this work. We will therefore refrain from dealing with ecstasy from a physiological or marvellous standpoint, and consider it only as a special degree of contemplative or mystical prayer.

Now from this point of view, we conclude, ecstasy essentially consists in so luminous a vision of the presence of God, and so vivid a sense of the union of the soul with the divinity, that there results from them not only the total suspension of the interior powers of the soul, as happens in the simple state of union, but also complete anæsthesia of the outward senses.

St Teresa has left us the following *description* of ecstasy according to her own experience:

"By the commands of the Bridegroom, the doors of the mansions and even those of the keep and of the whole castle are closed; for when he intends ravishing the soul he takes away the power of speech, and although occasionally the other

[1] St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxv, aa. 3 and 4.

faculties are retained rather longer, no word can be uttered. Sometimes the person is at once deprived of all the senses, the hands and body becoming as cold as if the soul had fled; occasionally no breathing can be detected. This condition lasts but a short while; I mean in the same degree, for when this profound suspension diminishes, the body seems to come to itself and gain strength to return again to this *death* which gives more vigorous *life* to the soul. This supreme state of ecstasy never lasts long; but although it ceases, it leaves the will so inebriated, and the mind so transported out of itself, that for a day, or sometimes for several days, such a person is incapable of attending to anything but what excites the will to the love of God."[1]

"While the soul is in this suspension, our Lord favours it by discovering to it *secrets* such as heavenly mysteries and imaginary visions, which admit of description afterwards because they remain so imprinted on the memory that it never forgets them. But when the visions are intellectual they are not thus easily related, some of those received at such a time being so sublime that it is not fitting for man, while living in the world, to understand them in a way that can be told, although when the use of the faculties returns much can be described of what was seen in intellectual vision. . . . Though the recipient is incapable of describing them, they are deeply imprinted in the centre of the soul and are never forgotten. . . . I think that if the soul learns no *mysteries* at any time during raptures, they are no true raptures. . . . I believe God ravishes the soul wholly to himself, as being his own and his bride, and shows her some small part of the kingdom she has thus won."[2]

"Here our Lord seems to seek to show the soul something of the land to which it is travelling, to give it courage to pass through the trials of its painful journey, now that it knows where it must go to find rest. . . . This favour . . . leaves in the soul . . . the following three graces of a very high order. The first of these is a *perception of the greatness of God*, which becomes clearer to us as we witness more of it. Secondly, we gain self-knowledge and humility. . . . The third grace is a contempt for all earthly things."[3]

"God is sometimes pleased, while a person is engaged in prayer and in perfect possession of her senses, to suspend them and to discover *sublime mysteries* to her which she appears to

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, ch. v.

see within God himself. . . . This is no imaginary vision but a highly intellectual one, wherein is manifested how all things are *beheld in God* and how he *contains them* within himself. It is of great value, for although passing in an instant, it remains deeply engraved in the memory."[1]

It is in these ravishing ecstasies that St Teresa so often had the vision of the Blessed Trinity, of which we have already had occasion to speak, but which it is well to recall once again, so much has this miraculous fact met, I do not say with unbelief, but with *minimizers* who seek to reduce it to an indirect or symbolical vision, in spite of the clear and unambiguous precision of her testimony.

In the vision of the Holy Trinity, she affirms to her spiritual Father, " I *see clearly* that the Persons *are distinct*, as I saw it yesterday when you, my father, were talking to the Father Provincial; only I saw nothing, and heard nothing. . . . But there is a *strange certainty* about it, though the eyes of the soul (the imagination) see nothing; and when the presence is withdrawn, that withdrawal is felt. . . . Though the Persons are distinct in a strange way, the soul *knows* one only God."[2]

We find identical, or at least analogous, testimonies in the case of several other mystics canonized by the Church.

Nevertheless, these *great lights* with which God floods the soul in ecstasy, precisely on account of their dazzling brightness, are mingled with *profound obscurity*, and it is this distinction from the beatific vision of heaven which enables the ecstatic still to retain faith, hope, and also liberty. Just as the sun is never less visible to the naked eye than when it shines most brightly, so the more the divine essence unfolds itself to the feeble eye of man the more it appears to be of an immensity without limit and truly *incomprehensible*. Hence the sublime mingling of incomparable lights with profound darkness. The more one sees, the more one understands that what is known is nothing compared to what remains to be understood.

" This divine wisdom," wrote St John of the Cross, " is not only secret beyond the powers of the soul to speak of it, during the darkness and sharpness of the purgation, when the secret wisdom is purifying the soul, but afterwards also, during the illumination, when that wisdom is most clearly communicated, it is so secret that it cannot be discerned or described. . . . The holy writings supply both proofs and illustrations of this principle. Jeremias shows the impossibility of manifesting

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. x. [2] *First Relation* to Fr. Rodriguez Alvarez.

and expressing it in words: for when God had spoken to him he knew not what to say, except 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord God.' Moses also is an instance of the interior helplessness . . . at the same time; for when God spoke to him out of the bush, he . . . saw that he could not speak. . . . Hence, inasmuch as the wisdom of this contemplation is the language of God addressed to the soul, as of a pure Spirit speaking to another pure spirit, nothing inferior to a spirit, such as the senses, is able to perceive it; it remains, therefore, a secret to them which they neither know nor can express, nor do they wish to know it because they do not even see it. This explains the case of some persons, walking in this way, good and timid souls, who, when they would give an account of their interior state to their directors, know not how to do it, neither have they the power to do it, and so feel a great repugnance to explain themselves, especially when contemplation is the more simple and with difficulty discernible by them."[1]

The question here arises as to the *benefit* that a soul receives from thus seeing things which it cannot understand. Easy as it is to admit revelations which enlighten and instruct us, it is equally difficult for us to accept those that are obscure and dark, the meaning of which is hidden from us, and whereof we are unable to render an account to ourselves.

Here is St Teresa's wise answer to this serious difficulty: " But, you will ask me, if the very sublime favours our Lord bestows in this mansion cannot afterwards be remembered, what profit do they bring? O daughters! their value cannot be overrated; for though the recipient is incapable of describing them, they are deeply imprinted in the centre of the soul and are never forgotten. How can they be remembered if no image is seen and the powers of the soul do not comprehend them? I, too, do not understand this, but I know that certain truths of the greatness of God remain so impressed on the spirit by this favour that, did not faith teach who he is and that it is bound to believe he is God, the soul would henceforth worship him as such, as did Jacob when he saw the ladder. . . . Neither was Moses able to relate more than God willed of what he had seen in the burning bush; but unless the Almighty had clearly revealed certain mysteries to his soul, causing it to see and know its God was present, the lawgiver could never have undertaken so many and such great labours. Such

[1] St John of the Cross, *Dark Night*, bk. ii, ch. xvii.

sublime revelations were shown him amidst the thorns of the bush as to give him the needful courage for his great deeds on behalf of the children of Israel."[1]

From this it is seen that the divine "darkness" is no less useful for our instruction than are the most ravishing enlightenments; for it makes us even better understand the infinite and unfathomable greatness of God. Perhaps, for apostolic souls, it is one of the most powerful mainsprings of unbounded trust in his all-powerful aid, in the midst of labour undertaken for his glory, and sufferings accepted for love of him. All can be ventured for such a Master, whose power and infinite perfection have been thus realized.

This transport, which withdraws the soul from the domain of the senses in order that it be uplifted and more completely absorbed in the invisible world, may assume *three forms: ecstasy* properly so-called, *rapture*, and the *flight of the spirit*. These three words often, among mystics, signify one and the same reality. Nevertheless, St Teresa, thanks to her incomparable experience, has been able carefully to distinguish degrees or important shades of difference which it is well to know.

1. In ordinary *ecstasy*, the suspension of the powers in God takes place tranquilly, with a gentle and calm sweetness, like a sort of flowing of the soul into the bosom of the divinity; thus mystics have often called it by the name of *flowing* or *liquefaction*. It might be compared to an overflowing or deliquescence of the soul, which seems to abandon its own life in order to be blended and lost in the ocean of life divine.

"Wherefore, as melted balm," says St Francis de Sales, "that no longer has firmness or solidity, she lets herself pass and flow into what she loves; she does not spring out of herself as by a sudden leap, nor does she cling as by a joining and union, but gently glides as a fluid and liquid thing into the divinity whom she loves. . . . You see then clearly, Theotimus, that the outflowing of a soul into her God is a true ecstasy."[2]

2. *Rapture*, as its name denotes, is always impetuous. Suddenly, either in the course of prayer or during the fulfilment of the most ordinary duties, God seems to descend on the

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.
[2] *Treatise on the Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. xii.

soul all at once in order to snatch it delightfully from corporal and sensitive life. St Teresa compares it to a "strong giant," to a "powerful whirlwind which carries everything away," or to an "eagle" which takes us up and bears us in its flight.

Our Saint, when she was with others and her humility was troubled thereby, endeavoured several times to resist, but quite uselessly. "Rapture, for the most part," she says, "is irresistible. It comes, in general, as a shock, quick and sharp, before you can collect your thoughts, or help yourself in any way, and you see it and feel it as a cloud, or a strong eagle rising upwards, and carrying you away on its wings. I repeat it: you feel and see yourself carried away, you know not whither. For though we feel how delicious it is, yet the weakness of our nature makes us afraid at first, and we require a much more resolute and courageous spirit than in the previous states."[1] . . .

3. The *flight of the spirit* is a rapture of special intensity which throws the mind into a stupor and a thrill of wonderment. The soul seems to separate itself from the body and to take its flight towards its blessed home; even the body at times follows the movement of the mind and finds itself raised from the earth by means of a divine attraction acting contrary to the laws of gravity. This is the marvellous phenomenon of levitation which we shall study in the second part of this work. We only mention it here because it is the outward and visible sign of what happens inwardly, when the soul is raised by God to those heights which approach so closely to the beatific vision.

It was such a rapture which raised St Paul to the third heaven, where he heard secrets which no mortal tongue could express: *et audivit arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui.*[2] He himself asks whether this impetuous flight of the soul had taken place with or without the body, and confesses that he cannot understand it: *sive in corpore sive extra corpus, nescio.* And all the mystics who have experienced the same favour have had to repeat the same avowal. Let us hearken, for instance, to St Teresa's account.

"To return to this sudden rapture of the spirit. The soul really appears to have quitted the body, which, however, is not lifeless, and though, on the other hand, the person is certainly not dead, yet she herself cannot, for a few seconds, tell whether her spirit remains within her body or not. She feels that she

[1] *Life*, ch. xx. [2] 2 *Cor.* xii 4.

has been wholly transported into another and a very different region from that in which we live, where a light so unearthly is shown that, if during her whole lifetime she had been trying to picture it and the wonders seen, she could not possibly have succeeded. In an instant her mind learns so many things at once that if the imagination and intellect spent years in striving to enumerate them, it could not recall a thousandth part of them."[1]

Nevertheless, if our Saint does not believe that her soul was separated from her body, she hazards the hypothesis of the " separation of the spirit from the soul." Here is her explanation of this opinion: " I cannot tell whether the soul dwells in the body meanwhile or not: I would neither affirm that it does nor that the body is deprived of it. I have often thought that as, though the sun does not leave his place in the heavens yet his rays have power to reach the earth instantaneously, so the soul and the spirit, which make one and the same thing (like the sun and its rays) may, while remaining in its own place, through the strength of the ardour coming to it from the true Sun of Justice, send up some higher part of it above itself. In fact, I do not understand what I am talking about, but the truth is that . . . an upward flight takes place in the interior of the soul. . . . It is too manifest a movement to be any illusion, and the soul is quite outside itself. . . . Great mysteries are revealed to it meanwhile."[2]

The discussion of this interesting problem would here be premature, and we shall postpone it until we are dealing with the curious phenomena of telepathy, vision at a distance, and second sight.

Ecstasy *lasts* but for a few moments, as St Teresa declares many times. " If half an hour, that would be a long time. I do not think that I have ever been so long."[3] But she speaks here of the " great ecstasy," the " complete " ecstasy, for she immediately adds: " At any time it cannot be very long before some one of the faculties recovers itself. It is the will that persists in the work; the other two faculties quickly begin to molest it. As the will is calm, it entrances them again; they are quiet for another moment, and then they recover themselves once more. In this way some hours may be, and are, passed in prayer. . . . But this state of complete absorption, to-

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. v.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Life*, ch. xviii.

gether with the utter rest of the imagination . . . lasts only for a short time; though the faculties do not so completely recover themselves as not to be for some hours afterwards as if in disorder; God, from time to time, drawing them to himself."[1]

Such is the enlightening explanation of those cases, so contradictory in appearance, in which it is stated that ecstasies have lasted much longer. Thus, St Thomas of Villanova remained for twelve hours in ecstasy and suspended in the air; Blessed Angela of Foligno, three days; St Ignatius, a week; St Colette, a fortnight; and St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, as long as forty days.[2] By way of exception, for some saints, such as St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi and St Joseph of Cupertino, life appears to have been one long series of ecstasies. St Teresa herself died after fourteen hours of ecstasy.

Nevertheless, neither their repetition nor their duration seemed to destroy the bodily health, but, on the contrary, often to give it new vigour. "This prayer," writes St Teresa, "however long it may last, does no harm—at least, it has never done any to me; nor do I remember, however ill I might have been when our Lord had mercy upon me in this way, that I ever felt the worse for it—on the contrary, I was always better afterwards. But so great a blessing, what harm can it do? The outward effects are so plain as to leave no doubt possible that there must have been some great cause, seeing that it thus robs us of our bodily powers with so much joy, in order to leave them greater."[3]

From all that has been said as to the nature of true ecstasy we may determine what are the *positive signs* by which it should be recognized, and, on the contrary, the *negative signs* which betray its falseness or counterfeits.

We may know it by its corporal, psychic, and spiritual effects, which may easily be summed up in a few words.

I. *Corporal effects.*—(1) Progressive and finally total insensibility of all the organs of sense: it is a complete suspension of the life of relation; (2) notable slackening of the vegetative life, cooling of the members, breathing and beating of the heart plainly diminished; (3) motionlessness of the limbs and vision: the body maintaining the attitude in which it was

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii.
[2] See the Bollandists, p. 221, *1st Life*, no. 151.
[3] *Life*, ch. xviii.

surprised; (4) on coming to, continuation of the movement or sentence begun; (5) the health, far from being adversely affected, finds therein a renewal of strength.

These corporal signs, however, are, with the exception of the last, far from being decisive, for they are common to certain morbid states, such as lethargy and natural or hypnotic somnambulism, of which we shall have occasion to speak at greater length in order to distinguish them from those of the ecstatic state.

II. The *psychic effects* are much more important. (1) Suspension of all the powers of the soul, in the sense which we have already explained; (2) involuntary passiveness of this suspension: an attribute common to all true mystical states; (3) wonderful illumination of the understanding on the divine mysteries; (4) remembrance on waking, at least confused, of what has been seen or heard; (5) certain writers add a sign well known under the name of *recall.* On a command from the spiritual superior, outwardly given—though at times purely mental—the ecstatic comes out of his ecstasy by obedience. In fact, this outward recall *always* succeeds if the ecstasy is divine, unless the viva voce command given be lacking in sincerity and without that interior will that it be obeyed. In such a case the ecstatic does not stir. This sign, however, does not seem to us to be decisive, for the devil might ape obedience, without for all that giving the interior dispositions of this virtue.

III. The *spiritual effects*, when united to the preceding, are truly decisive. (1) A new and luminous knowledge of God and of things divine: the understanding is found to be stimulated in an astonishing way; (2) the heart expands with a greater love for God and man: contempt of self extending to an heroic humility; (3) a burning zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and complete detachment from all else; (4) a tenderness of conscience fearing the least imperfection, without, however, any pretensions to impeccability.

The *absence of these signs*, or the appearance of contrary signs, before, during, or after the ecstasy, are sure indications that it is not divine. The following are the most evident:

I. *Before.*—(1) Seeking to bring about ecstasy by one's own effort; (2) seeking frequented spots in order to be observed; (3) living in a state of sin or of serious imperfection.

II. *During.*—Uttering incoherent words, exhibiting inordinate gestures, assuming unseemly and even scandalous attitudes.

III. *After.*—(1) Having no remembrance of the ecstasy: thus

showing that nothing striking or divine has been seen or heard; (2) remaining for a long time in a state of agitation, anxiety, or nervous or physical fatigue; (3) showing no new knowledge, nor any stronger convictions, nor any fruit of sanctity.

In a *few brief words*, which we shall enlarge upon in the proper place, by contrasting true with false ecstasy, natural or pathological swooning is a phenomenon of lethargy and death, undermining the health, emptying the understanding and the heart; it is a " contraction of the field of consciousness." Ecstatic and divine swooning is an expansion of the life of God, hidden beneath the appearance of death, in no way producing ill effects on the health; illuminating the mind and inflaming the heart, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

§ 5

Prayer of perfect union or spiritual marriage

All mystical theologians are agreed in placing, above ecstatic union, a still more perfect degree of union, the height of earthly contemplation and a foretaste of eternal beatitude.

This fourth kind of prayer corresponds with the seventh and last Mansion of St Teresa. In spite of certain points of resemblance with the preceding, our Saint *very clearly distinguishes* it therefrom.

" This and the following mansions," she writes, " may be treated as one, the door leading from one to the other being wide open. However, as some things in the last rooms are only shown to those who get thus far, I thought it better to treat the mansions separately."[1]

Another motive for making a distinction between this new state and ecstatic union is that in it ecstasy may become very rare there, and even be entirely wanting, for reasons which can already be foreseen.

That weakness of the external senses which characterizes ecstasy is the result of their natural weakness and imperfection. Now God is able to strengthen them and transfigure them until they are rendered capable of supporting, without fainting, visions and raptures which formerly would have made them swoon. As Suarez has remarked, our Lord, during his mortal life, was able to enjoy the beatific vision without ever falling into the swoon of ecstasy; and the blessed in heaven, in

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.

spite of their contemplating God face to face, are not subject thereto. The highest summit of contemplative life here below seems, then, to coincide with freedom from this weakness and natural imperfection of the life of the senses; that is to say, with rarity and even complete absence of the swoons of ecstasy.

This phenomenon, which at first much surprised St Teresa, is thus explained in the *Interior Castle* : " I, too, am astonished," she says, " at seeing that when the soul arrives at this state it does not go into ecstasies except perhaps on rare occasions —even then they are not like the former trances and the flight of the spirit, and seldom take place in public as they did before. They are no longer produced by any special calls to devotion, such as by the sight of a religious picture, by hearing a sermon (were it only the first few words), or by sacred music; formerly, like the poor little butterfly, the soul was so anxious that anything used to alarm it and make it take flight. This may be either because the spirit has at last found repose, or that it has seen such wonders in this mansion that nothing can frighten it, or perhaps because it no longer feels solitary since it rejoices in such company. In short, sisters, I cannot tell the reason, but as soon as God shows the soul what this mansion contains, bringing it to dwell within the precincts, the infirmity, formerly so troublesome to the mind and impossible to get over, disappears at once. Probably this is because our Lord has now strengthened, dilated and developed the soul."[1]

Nevertheless, the *absence of ecstasy* is so far only a *negative sign*, and a most insufficient one, of this most perfect union, whose nature and *positive character* it remains for us to explain.

In order to understand it, let us first remember that God, who in the Holy Scriptures is called Creator, Lord and Master, Shepherd, Physician, Father and Friend, seems to prefer to all these titles that of *Spouse of our souls*, because it expresses more vividly his tenderness and the sacred union which his grace wills to establish between himself and the faithful soul.

However strange such expressions as spouse, bride, and marriage may appear to men who are still worldly and carnal, lacking in the sense of spiritual things and ignorant of the language of divine love, they are so often and boldly employed by our sacred Books, so inseparable from Catholic dogma and

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. iii.

theology, that we may not pass them by unnoticed nor suppress them, without deeply mutilating the Christian religion itself.

Not only has the Lord taught us that his delights are to be with the children of men: *deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum*;[1] not only has he promised those who love him that he will come and dwell in their souls and establish his habitation there: *si quis diligit me ad eum veniemus et mansionem apud eum faciemus*,[2] but again he desires to establish with chosen souls a much closer alliance, comparable to spiritual betrothal and marriage. Hence the so frequent use of these metaphors by sacred writers to express the gifts of grace and glory. In heaven the souls of the blessed celebrate their eternal nuptials with the divine Spouse, and on earth, rare and privileged souls are already, by anticipation, admitted to a glimpse of their splendours and to foresee their ravishing delights.

St Paul rejoiced in reminding the faithful of Corinth that he had betrothed their souls to Jesus Christ: *Despondi enim vos uni viro, virginem castem exhibere Christo*,[3] and in his Epistle to the Ephesians he does not hesitate to draw a formal parallel between the union of Christ with his Church and the union of the man with the woman, in order to show that this alliance between Christ and the soul is a sacrament full of mystery and grandeur: *Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego dico in Christo et in ecclesia*.[4]

St John, again, in the Apocalypse, shows us in the light of glory the bride of the divine Lamb, adorned for her eternal marriage feast: *Ego Joannes vidi sanctam civitatem Jerusalem novam descendentem de coelo a Deo, paratam sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo*.[5] "Come and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb": *Veni et ostendam tibi sponsam, uxorem Agni*.[6] "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath prepared herself. And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen glittering and white": *Gaudeamus et exultemus et demus gloriam ei : quia venerunt nuptiae Agni et uxor ejus praeparavit se . . . cooperta byssino splendenti et candido*.[7]

Long before the Apocalypse, the Canticle of Canticles had already employed the same figures. And what else is the whole of this book, if not a nuptial song, inspired by the Holy Ghost,

[1] *Prov.* viii 31. [2] *Joan.* xiv 23. [3] 2 *Cor.* xi 2. [4] *Eph.* v 32. [5] *Apoc.* xxi 2. [6] *Ibid.* xxi 9. [7] *Ibid.* xix 7-8.

in order to celebrate for all time this glorious marriage of the soul with its God ?

Far from being alarmed at these images, all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, with a holy fearlessness and a noble enthusiasm, have lavishly repeated them—as witness St Thomas, who, on his deathbed, was occupied in writing a commentary on this divine poem; and the theologians in their turn have borrowed therefrom their beautiful teaching concerning the spiritual marriage; that far from its being the shadow and figure of human marriage, on the contrary it is the latter which is a kind of feeble imitation of the former and derives all its dignity from its distant resemblance to the alliance of Christ with his Church, the model of all earthly unions. So that it is to the spiritualizing and even the deification of Christian marriage that we must look, and in nowise the materialization and profanation of the mystical union of the soul with its God.

For if the *consciousness of this divine union* be entirely wanting to souls detained in the ordinary ways of Christian perfection, it is awakened and appears in different degrees, although in a transitory and fugitive way, in the first stages of the mystical life, especially in those of simple union and ecstatic union. It is only in the perfect union of spiritual marriage that it becomes at once very clear and distinct, continuous and permanent.

This transformation from a state of unconsciousness to one of full consciousness is comparable to the metamorphosis, familiar to St Teresa, of the ugly silkworm into the beautiful white butterfly.

We are able, then, thus to *define* this new stage which crowns and completes, on earth, the mystical ascension of the soul in the Christian life: *it is an experimental knowledge, and a most profound and permanent consciousness, not only of the presence of God in the soul, but also of his most intimate, familiar, and indissoluble union therewith.*

In this definition, experimental knowledge of God is the connecting genus, common to all the degrees of mystical union. That which constitutes the specific character of spiritual marriage is at the same time the perfectness of the intimacy of this union, in a greater light unmixed with darkness, its indissoluble character, and also the stability or permanence of the consciousness of it in the soul.

This does not mean, however, that the expression *permanent and continued consciousness* must be taken literally, otherwise sleep, the inevitable distractions of the mind, the absorbing

occupations of life, would become impossible. It is only a matter of moral or habitual continuity.

It remains to know *how*, that is, by what symbolic ceremony this spiritual marriage is usually accomplished in the soul, and *what effects* it produces. The examination of these two questions will result in enabling us to understand the nature and also the perfection of this last mystical stage.

On the first question, that of *ceremonial*, St Teresa will answer us that the perfection of so sublime a work, like that of all the great works of Providence, demands a gradual preparation and takes time. The entrance of the divine Spouse into a dwelling never takes place suddenly, but little by little. As in all earthly unions, there are first of all visits, then betrothal, and only in the last place is the contract of indissoluble union sealed.

The betrothal and other preliminaries of marriage being accomplished in the earlier mystical states, especially that of ecstasy, we might have dealt with these at that time, but we deemed it better not to divide our subject, but to treat of the marriage and its preparation at one time, otherwise the clearness of our study might have suffered.

We shall leave St Teresa, the seraphic virgin, to speak to us respecting these *preparations*, her rich experience being sufficient to enlighten and convince us.

" You have often heard that God spiritually espouses souls: may he be praised for his mercy in thus humbling himself so utterly. Though but a homely comparison, yet I can find nothing better to express my meaning than the sacrament of matrimony. . . . I think this union does not attain as far as the spiritual espousals, but resembles the preliminaries that take place when two people are contemplating a betrothal. Their suitability and willingness for the alliance are first discussed; then they may be allowed to see one another sometimes so as to come to a decision. Thus it is in the spiritual espousals; when the preliminary agreement has been made and the soul thoroughly understands what great advantages she will gain, having resolved to fulfil the will of her Spouse in all things and to do all she can to please him, his Majesty, who knows well whether this is so in reality, wishes to gratify his bride. He therefore bestows this favour upon her, visits her and draws her into his presence, as he wishes her to know him better. We might compare the prayer of union to a visit, for it lasts but a very little while. There is no longer any

question of deliberation, but the soul in a secret manner sees to what a Bridegroom it is betrothed; the senses and powers could not, in a thousand years, gain the knowledge thus imparted in a very short time."[1]

It is useless to return to the simple *visits* paid by the divine Spouse in the lower degrees of contemplation, for we have studied them already. Let us at once proceed to the *betrothal*, the ordinary prelude of the perfect union.

The *betrothal* is a reciprocal promise of a coming marriage. On the part of God, it is an assurance given to the soul that he will soon bestow upon her the glorious title of bride, will raise her to a state still more desirable, and will be associated with her in a permanent and indissoluble manner.

It is always in a vision—and ordinarily a vision purely intellectual, that is to say, one that is freed from all sensible images—that God presents himself to the privileged soul in order to bring about this ineffable prelude to the mystical alliance.

Occasionally, however, it is in an imaginative vision, accompanied by symbolic rites, that our Lord presents himself, under sensible forms; nay, even in a tangible and corporal apparition. The lives of the saints have given us several instances of this latter case, which is the more striking, because it helps us to understand the former, by setting before our eyes an allegorical ceremony, entirely expressive of these divine promises.

Here is an example in the life of St Catherine de Ricci, of the Order of St Dominic:

"On the 9th of April, 1542, being Easter Day," writes her biographer, "Catherine finding herself in her cell towards the early morning, Jesus Christ appeared to her clothed in glory, carrying a resplendent cross on his shoulder, and wearing a magnificent crown on his head, accompanied by the glorious Virgin Mary his Mother, St Mary Magdalen, St Thomas Aquinas, and another blessed one of her order. Her cell was immediately filled with a blinding light, and a multitude of angels, gracefully arrayed, were drawn up in order in the air, bearing in their hands various musical instruments. At the sight of so much majesty, Catherine was seized with a great fear, and having fulfilled the prescriptions of obedience, prostrated herself three times on the ground in adoration of Jesus. Then the most holy Mother of God begged her divine Son to be

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. iv.

pleased to take Catherine for his bride. Jesus readily consented, and while the Blessed Virgin presented him with the hand of his humble betrothed, he drew from his own ring-finger a shining ring, which he himself placed on the first finger of the left hand of Catherine, saying to her, ' My daughter, receive this ring as a pledge and testimony that thou art mine and wilt be mine for ever.' And when Catherine desired to declare to him her gratitude, finding no words adequate to the favour she had just received, the angels suddenly began to draw so sweet a melody from their instruments that it seemed that her cell had become a Paradise. Jesus then exhorted her to practise humility, obedience, and all Christian virtues; and after having made her taste some of the pure and ravishing joys of the mind which he reserves for his beloved spouses, he disappeared with all his company."[1]

Another daughter of St Dominic, St Catherine of Siena, had the same vision, with certain differences in the details. The Blessed Virgin Mary, who was accompanied by St John the Evangelist, St Paul the apostle, and St Dominic, likewise presented the right hand of the virgin to her divine Son, who took it, placing on the ring-finger a most beautiful ring of gold and diamonds, and addressed her in similar words. This ring always remained on the finger of the holy spouse, but was visible to her alone. It is this vision which Fra Bartolommeo's famous picture has immortalized.

To St Catherine of Bologna, to St Rose of Lima, and to many other holy women, it is the divine Child who appeared, carried in the arms of his holy Mother. In these cases the ceremony of the ring appears to be wanting, but as by exception, for it is found again in the betrothals of St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, Blessed Angela of Foligno, St Colette, the Ven. Mother Agnès de Langeac, and of almost all the holy spouses of our Lord Jesus Christ. And these facts are so numerous in the lives of the saints, verified by such learned hagiographers as the Bollandists, that it would be rash to contest their perfect authenticity.

Nevertheless, we repeat that the imaginative and sensible vision is in no way necessary for true betrothal. A purely intellectual vision, without images, suffices. Thus it was with St Teresa, and according to our Saint this is the more common case.

[1] *Vie de Sainte Catherine de Ricci*, by Père Bayonne, t. 1, ch. x, p. 169.

After this divine betrothal, the privileged soul that has been favoured therewith feels itself wounded with a *wound of love* at once delicious and consuming. From the time that it has seen its divine Spouse, it sighs after the joy of a more complete possession and longs with all its might for the moment of the blessed alliance. Upheld by the hope that God's formal promise has made a certainty, it consumes itself in waiting, and lovingly submits to all the new trials which still separate it from this new mystical Mansion; for in spite of the ardour of its yearning, the Spouse wishes it to have still greater desire, and that it should perfect its purification in the crucible of suffering. For so loving a soul, to suffer is nothing compared to the honour and joy which await it.

The marriage.—Finally the happy day arrives which is to fulfil its desire. We are about to assist at a quite new and marvellous ceremony, which St Teresa will describe to us in all its detail. She begins by warning us of the very great difference between that which follows and all that has already passed in the betrothed soul. "You must understand," she writes, "that between the visions seen in this and in the former mansions there is a vast difference; there is the same distinction between spiritual espousals and spiritual marriage as between people who are only betrothed and others who are united for ever in holy matrimony."[1]

A little further on she completes her thought thus: "Spiritual betrothal is different, and like the grace of union, is often dissolved. For though two things are made one by union, separation is still possible, and each part then remains a thing by itself. This favour generally passes quickly, and afterwards the soul, as far as it is aware, remains without his company. This is not so in the spiritual marriage with our Lord, where the soul always remains in its centre with its God."[2]

Thus the indissolubility of the bond, joined to its greater penetration or intimacy, are already the characters which suffice to distinguish from the betrothals the spiritual marriage properly so-called. But these are as yet only the externals, and our Saint is about to introduce us into much more intimate secrets.

When our Lord wishes to grant to a chosen soul the grace of this divine marriage, he begins first of all by *introducing* it into his own dwelling. According to St Teresa, this dwelling is the centre of the soul in which the august Trinity, in three

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. ii. [2] *Ibid.*

Persons, dwells, in accordance with the promise: " If any man love me, we will come to him and make our abode with him."[1]

This *centre* of the Interior Castle, which is St Teresa's seventh Mansion, is what St John of the Cross, in equivalent terms, calls " the substance of the soul." Blessed Angela of Foligno seems to invert the metaphor without changing the teaching. According to her, it is not the soul which enters into its own centre, but rather it goes out of itself to plunge itself into and be lost in the centre of the august Trinity. In reality the two images express the same idea, that of the fusion of the soul in the depths of the divinity, but St Teresa's expression appears to us to be more in keeping with the text from St John, which we have just called to mind, and with a large number of other phrases fron the sacred books in which the kingdom of God is represented as being within us: *Regnum Dei intra vos est.*[2]

Besides which it is the only expression which is in accord with the data of St Teresa's *Interior Castle*. In the centre is the dwelling of the august Trinity, the divine Sun, whose light radiates through the crystal partitions of the neighbouring Mansions, becoming less and less brilliant or more and more obscure as these Mansions are further from the centre, from which they are separated by crystal partitions increasing in thickness. Far away, a gentle warmth only is felt from this light; in the centre alone is it the object of a true and perfect vision.

The second marvel which our Lord performs in a soul that has entered into this central Mansion, is to *open her eyes* and allow this new spiritual sense of vision fully to expand, and therefore to produce a complete understanding and consciousness of what is taking place within her; she also becomes capable of expressing it: the bandage seems to fall, and, no longer blind, she ceases on this very account to be more or less dumb. These are the words of the mystical Saint:

" When our Lord," she writes, " is pleased to take pity on the sufferings . . . [of] this soul which he has spiritually taken for his bride, he, before consummating the celestial marriage, brings her into this his mansion or presence-chamber. This is the seventh Mansion. . . . In the former favours our Lord unites the spirit to himself and makes it both *blind* and *dumb* like St Paul after his conversion, thus preventing its knowing whence or how it enjoys this grace, for the supreme delight of the spirit is to realize its nearness to God. During

[1] *Joan.* xiv 23. [2] *Luc.* xvii 21.

the actual moment of divine union the soul feels nothing, all its powers being entirely lost. But now he acts differently; our pitiful God *removes the scales* from its eyes, letting it see and understand somewhat of the grace received in a strange and wonderful manner in this mansion by means of intellectual vision. By some mysterious manifestation of the truth, the three Persons of the most Blessed Trinity reveal themselves, preceded by an illumination which shines on the spirit like a most dazzling cloud of light. The three Persons are distinct from one another; a sublime knowledge is infused into the soul, imbuing it with a certainty of the truth that the Three are of one substance, power, and knowledge, and are one God. Thus that which we hold as a doctrine of faith, the soul now, so to speak, understands by sight, though it beholds the Blessed Trinity neither by the eyes of the body nor of the soul, this being no imaginary vision. All the three Persons here communicate themselves to the soul, speak to it and make it understand the words of our Lord in the Gospel that he and the Father and the Holy Ghost will come and make their abode with the soul which loves him and keeps his commandments."[1]

The Saint adds that this sublime vision, once it has appeared, remains thenceforward in the soul as it were habitually, although with varying brightness, which does not depend on its own effort, but solely on the good pleasure of our Lord.[2]

This is why St Teresa has spoken to us so often and in such detail of this vision of the Holy Trinity, and with such certainty and so absolute a conviction, that she was able to write to her director that therein " I *see clearly* that the Persons are distinct, as I saw it yesterday when you, my father, were talking to the Father Provincial; only I saw nothing and heard nothing . . . and when the presence is withdrawn, that withdrawal is felt."[3]

Such is the second marvel wrought in the soul at the time of its spiritual marriage. Now we come to the *third*, which puts, so to speak, the seal to the sacred contract. It consists once more in an intellectual vision in which the Word Incarnate shows himself, with words and testimony informing the soul that she is raised to the dignity of bride. This alliance is thus effected in the presence of the august Trinity, which witnesses it, but—let it be well noted—it is effected by the Word Incarnate: which tallies most wonderfully with the highest data of theology.

And it is not only the Word, but the *Word clothed with our*

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. i. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *First letter* to Father Rodrigo Alvarez.

humanity, our Lord Jesus Christ, who becomes the veritable spouse of our souls. Alone, indeed, the second Person of the Holy Trinity has willed to espouse our human nature, by his blessed incarnation, in order to be able to unite himself more easily with the children of men, and knit with them those bonds of friendship which always imply a certain likeness between the friends. To this end he made himself like to us, and, together with our flesh, clothed himself with all its infirmities and miseries, save only sin and ignorance. Now these ties of friendship, with the most holy and privileged souls, become as intimate and indissoluble as those of the sacrament of marriage. The name and role of spouse of our souls, then, must only be attributed to the Word Incarnate, to the exclusion of the other two Persons; for it is but the continuation and extension of his union with our humanity.

At the same time is verified the principle put forward by our Lord himself: " No man cometh to the Father but by me ": *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me.*[1] " I am the way, the truth and the life ": *Ego sum via, veritas et vita.*[2]

This is the formal condemnation of that false mysticism that claims to be able to attain to divine union without being obliged to make use of the mediation of our Lord, who is our divine Mediator—a pretension wittily ridiculed by the lines of Fléchier.[3]

This natural need of a corporal and sensible element in order to unite man with God is so great, that the intellectual and imageless vision of the Word Incarnate of which we have spoken is often preceded by an imaginative vision as a preparation for it.

" The first time," writes St Teresa, " God bestows this grace, he, by an imaginary vision of his most sacred humanity, reveals himself to the soul so that it may understand and realize the sovereign gift it is receiving. He may manifest himself in a different way to other people; the person I mentioned [herself], after having received Holy Communion, beheld our Lord, full of splendour, beauty and majesty, as he was after his resurrection. He told her that henceforth she was to care

[1] *Joan.* xiv 6. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Le mystique, appuyé des dons qu'il a reçus*
Laisse là Jésus-Christ et passe par-dessus,
Porte, sans s'arrêter à ces faibles images,
A Dieu, son créateur, ses uniques hommages,
S'élève comme un aigle et, d'un vol généreux,
Va fixer au Soleil son regard amoureux.
Œuvres mêlées (1712), pp. 348-350.

for his affairs as though they were her own and he would care for hers; he spoke other words which she understood better than she can repeat them."[1]

The sensible role which the *Eucharist* and Holy Communion play in the realization of this heavenly union is, indeed, a last detail of the highest importance. As the Word became incarnate in order to act as our Mediator, so he has willed to prolong this incarnation, and his sensible presence in the midst of us, by means of the sacrament of the Eucharist. So that it is most often during eucharistic Communion that this divine marriage with the soul is celebrated and this divine contract sealed in a sensible and tangible manner. The sacramental union then becomes the means and symbol of a most intimate and indissoluble alliance. As all the mystic saints have vied with each other in claiming for it, the Eucharist has been for them the nuptial Banquet, the secret Chamber, the mystical Couch, the Fountain sealed, the Garden of delight, the Throne of honour . . . in a word, the Centre of all mystical life, as it is the centre of the whole Catholic religion.

Such is the *manner* in which this spiritual marriage is accomplished, the *nature* of which we have already explained; it still remains for us to describe the *effects* produced by it in the soul.

What are, in the new bride of Christ, the *proper effects* of her divine marriage?

First of all, it is clear that all the effects of sanctity which are produced in the lower states of union should be found in this higher stage in a pre-eminent and complete degree, especially those of humility, forgetfulness of self, desire to endure suffering for God's sake, abandonment to his good pleasure, and so forth. In a word, the soul enters fully into that state of pure love, already begun in the first stages of her perfection, in which she only thinks of the glory of God, without usually seeking either her own honour or her earthly happiness, or even the happiness of heaven. Not that she should formally renounce this last, as is maintained by false mystics; but that, having once placed her interests in the hands of her divine spouse, she no longer thinks of them, according to the counsel of our Lord to St Teresa, when he took her as his bride: "Be thou occupied with my interests, I will take care of thine."

All these effects being common, in different degrees, to all

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. ii.

the stages of contemplation, we may set them aside here in order to point out more strongly the effects that are characteristic of, *or proper to*, the perfect union which now occupies us.

I. Now the first effect of Christian marriage—or at least that which its mere name unavoidably suggests to us—is its *indissolubility*. But the indissolubility of our union with God practically implies at least a relative *impeccability*—that is to say, a powerlessness to rupture this union by mortal sin or to disturb it by venial sin committed with deliberate intention. As for the imperfections and venial faults which overtake it unexpectedly, to these the soul always remains subject: this is a sad infirmity of its nature and a trial that will only cease with life.

Now is such a privilege, thus understood, really an effect of mystical marriage? St John of the Cross does not hesitate to affirm this. "I believe," he says, "that no soul ever attains to this state without being confirmed in grace, for the faithfulness of both is confirmed, that of God being confirmed in the soul."[1]

Indeed, it is most reasonable to think that the graces, so extraordinary and superabundant, with which the divine Spouse fills the soul of his bride, are to her a sure guarantee of inviolable fidelity. Such also is the almost unanimous opinion of theologians. The latter, indeed, hold that the single fact of having taken a soul as bride is equivalent on the part of our Lord to that special revelation which the Council of Trent requires, before a soul can be assured that she has received the gift of final perseverance: *Si quis magnum illud usque in finem perseverantiae donum se certo habiturum, absoluta et infallibili certitudine dixerit, nisi hoc* ex speciali revelatione *didicerit, anathema sit.*[2]

Nevertheless, St Teresa is far from being so definite. It is impossible for those who have read her writings not to be struck with the insistence with which she preaches the fear of God, even for the most perfect, and practises it herself on her own account. This so pure and so perfect lover of God does not cease to repeat: *Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord!* And she never tires of saying: "Therefore meditate on this text and often recall it: *Beatus vir qui timet Dominum!*"[3] She hardly seems more assured respecting even those brides of Christ to whom she addresses the following words: "You must not suppose, sisters, that the effects I mentioned always exist in the same degree in these souls . . . our Lord occasionally

[1] *Spirit. Cant.*, str. 22. [2] *Sess.* vi, can. 16. [3] *Castle*, 3rd M., ch. i.

leaves such persons to the weakness of their nature. The venomous creatures from the moat around the castle and the other mansions at once unite to revenge themselves for the time when they were deprived of their power. True, this lasts but a short time—a day, perhaps, or a little longer. . . . This trouble rarely happens. . . . Do not fancy that in spite of the strong desire and determination of these souls that they do not commit imperfections and even fall into many sins: that is, not wilfully; for such people are given special grace from God on this point: I mean venial sins. As far as they are aware, they are free from mortal sins, although they do not feel certain they may not be guilty of some of which they are ignorant. This grieves their hearts sorely, as does the sight of the souls perishing around them; although on the one hand they have *strong hopes* of not being themselves among the number of the lost, yet remembering what we are told in Holy Scripture of the fate of men who, like Solomon, seemed the special favourites of God and conversed so familiarly with his Majesty, *they cannot help fearing for themselves*. Let that one among you who feels most confidence on this point fear the most, for 'Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord,' as David said. May his Majesty ever protect us. Let us beg him never to permit us to offend him: therein lies our greatest safety."[1]

In spite of the notable difference in tone between these words and those of St John of the Cross, it is impossible for us to find in them a difference in teaching. The *absolute and infallible* certainty of having received the gift of final perseverance, of which the Council of Trent speaks, is never given us in this world. But a *moral* certainty amply suffices, and has the double advantage of keeping us in that profound peace with which we are inspired by filial trustfulness as children of God, and at the same time keeping us deeply humble. Distrust of ourselves and confidence in God will always represent the two poles of Christian morality, and the gift of mystical marriage, sublime as it is, cannot reverse or change in anything this pre-eminently reasonable dispensation of divine Providence.

II. Nevertheless, the indissolubility of this new bond between the soul and the divine Spouse does not yet make clear to us the nature of this tie nor the essential effects which it produces in the consciousness. Let us then press on with the study of these, and in spite of their number we will first sum them up in a word. As in human marriage, so there is

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. iv.

established a perfect *community* of possessions between the bride which is the soul and the Word Incarnate.

1. The first of these is the habitual *presence* of the Spouse with his bride, resulting in their constant and mutual indwelling. St Teresa has already brought to our notice that in simple betrothal the sense of this presence is but passing and fugitive, whilst after the marriage it becomes permanent and habitual. And as the divine Word is inseparable from the other two Persons, it is, indeed, the presence of the august Trinity as a whole of which our Saint always had more or less clear consciousness, to the extent that when she lost it even for a moment she immediately perceived the fact. It is superfluous to dwell on all the spiritual advantages which she drew from this, either as regards the rapid progress in the exercise of every virtue or the strengthening of her soul in the midst of tribulations and the most painful trials, for if God is with us, whom have we to fear? *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?*[1]

2. The second community is that of *possessions and riches*, so often described by St Teresa. While she was at the foundation of Seville, she tells us, "our Lord said to me: 'Thou knowest of the betrothal between thee and myself, and therefore all I have is thine; and so I give thee all the labours and sorrows I endured, and thou canst therefore ask of my Father as if they were thine.' Though I have heard that we are partakers therein, now it was in a way so different that it seemed as if I had become possessed of a great principality; for the affection with which he wrought this grace cannot be described. The Father seemed to ratify the gift; and from that time forth I look at our Lord's Passion in a very different light, as on something that belongs to me; and that gives me great comfort."[2]

3. The communication of *secrets* and *intellectual possessions* is still more striking, and it is a fact fully confirmed in the lives of the saints. The Spouse seems to feel a need to pour out his most intimate secrets into the heart of the bride whom his tenderness identifies with himself. Thus our Lord seems to take pleasure in unveiling to the eyes of his cherished brides all that is highest and most hidden in the mysteries of the faith, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Passion, and other mysteries of the life of the Saviour, the Eucharist, grace on earth and the glory of heaven, and so on. The secrets, even

[1] *Rom.* viii 31.

[2] *Relation of Spiritual Graces received at Toledo and Avila in* 1576-7.

of the future, or those of the present, hidden in the depths of conscience or in far-off and inaccessible places, are at times unveiled to the sight of these faithful brides who appear to participate in the gifts of prophecy, of second sight or clairvoyance, or in reading the thoughts of the heart. The supernatural lights of our holy men and women—such, for instance, as the Curé d'Ars or of St Margaret Mary—are those amongst all the heavenly gifts which have excited the greatest wonder, not among the simple faithful only, but also among theologians and the learned. How can they know such things if they have not learnt them? *Quomodo hic litteras scit cum non didicerit?*[1]

We content ourselves here with pointing out this marvellous fact, intending to return to it at greater length in the second part of this work.

4. This community between the Bridegroom and spouse extends even to the *fusion of lives*, and we might almost go so far as to say to the blending of being—always safeguarding the essential difference of substances and persons. The communion of the two natures, divine and human, according to the bold and lofty words of St Peter: *efficiamini divinae consortes naturae*[2]—words so admirably paraphrased by St Paul: "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me": *vivo jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus*[3]—here becomes a full and complete reality.

In order to endeavour a little to understand so profound a truth, we must again hearken to St Teresa, drawing from her mind every possible help in order to portray a faint image of it. The comparison of two torches so close together that they give but a single light, does not seem to her sufficient to describe the union of the two lives. "Spiritual marriage," she adds, "is like rain falling from heaven into a river or stream, becoming one and the same liquid, so that the river and rain water cannot be divided; or it resembles a streamlet flowing into the ocean, which cannot afterwards be disunited from it. This marriage may also be likened to a room into which a bright light enters through two windows—though divided when it enters, the light becomes one and the same. Perhaps when St Paul said, 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit,' he meant this sovereign marriage, which presupposes his Majesty's having been joined to the soul by union. The same Apostle says: 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for his apostles, asked that they

[1] *Joan.* vii 15. [2] 2 *Petri* i 4. [3] *Galat.* ii 20.

might be made *one with* the Father and with himself, as Jesus Christ our Lord is in the Father and the Father in him."[1]

5. From this fusion of lives there flows a participation in all those of the divine attributes which are communicable and which, on account of their number, we can only indicate in passing; notably participation by the bride in the inward beatitude of her Spouse, and outwardly in his empire over nature and the devil. Finally, all these united communications of divine treasures imprint on the soul which is crowned with them a dazzling *beauty* which transfigures it. The bride, decked with all the marvellous jewels which her divine Spouse has lavished upon her, is truly she whose charms and incomparable enticement the Canticle of Canticles sings. God has enriched her with his own beauty, and, like the moon, she shines but with the brightness of the Sun. Again, as in the sacred Canticle, and in language which may scandalize carnal men incapable of understanding it, whilst the bride celebrates the beauty of her Beloved, he in his turn exalts the all-pure and stainless beauty of his bride, the resplendent reflection of her divine Spouse. So that if on earth the resemblance cannot be entirely perfect, it is at least a prelude and foretaste of that of heaven, where the eternal nuptials will be celebrated with the Lamb. Then, says St John, we shall be like unto him, because, seeing him face to face, we shall be transfigured by his light: *Cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est.*[2]

III. Let us also add a third and last effect, on the importance of which St Teresa has much insisted: an *entirely new zeal for apostolic works.* In the same way that in natural marriage the proximate end is the production of a numerous family, so that the bride counts it an honour to be fruitful and fears sterility as a curse, so in spiritual marriage, spiritual fruitfulness in good works must be a duty and an imperious need. The bride of Christ is not born for repose and luxury, but for work, and vowed to every sacrifice.

Let us listen to our seraphic Saint as she thus describes "the reason why God bestows such favours on souls in this world." "I return to the matter," she says, "in order that none of you may think it is only for the sake of the pleasure such persons feel, which would be a great mistake on your part, for his Majesty can bestow no greater favour on us than to give us a life such as was led by his beloved Son. Therefore . . . I

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. ii. [2] 1 *Joan.* iii 2.

feel certain that these graces are sent to strengthen our weakness so that we may imitate him by suffering much. We always find that those nearest to Christ our Lord bear the heaviest cross: think of what his glorious Mother and the Apostles bore. How do you think St Paul went through such immense labours? We learn from his conduct the fruits of genuine visions and contemplation which come from our Lord and not from our own imagination, or the devil's fraud. Do you suppose that St Paul hid himself to enjoy these spiritual consolations at leisure, and did nothing else? You know that he never took a day's rest as far as we can learn, nor could he have slept much since he worked all night to get his living. . . . *This* is the end and aim of prayer, my daughters; *this* is the reason of the spiritual marriage whose children are always good works. *Works* are the unmistakable sign which show these favours come from God."[1]

A little further on, St Teresa affirms that she has noticed that, among the graces of their state bestowed by Christ upon his brides, new forces have often become evident, not only moral but also physical, to enable them to perform labours for which they would have been naturally incapable: the supernatural force with which the soul feels itself penetrated in this seventh Mansion communicates itself to the powers, to the senses, to the whole of the Interior Castle.

" Beyond doubt, with the force thus gained, the soul succours all within the castle and even the very body itself, which often seems to have no feeling left in it. The vigour the soul derives from the ' wine ' drunk in the ' cellar ' (into which the Bridegroom brought her and would not let her go) overflows into the feeble body, just as the food we eat nourishes both the head and the whole frame. Indeed, the body suffers much while alive, for whatever work it does, the soul has energy for far greater tasks and goads it on to more, for all it can perform appears as nothing. . . . This, my sisters, is what I would have us strive for—to offer our petitions and to practise prayer, not for our own enjoyment but to gain strength to serve God."[2]

It is well known how St Teresa, while giving her children this counsel of the apostolate, gave them also the most beautiful example of it; how her life was wholly consumed with innumerable labours for the reform of Carmel and the founding of so many new monasteries. As a young girl she dreamed of far-off missions and of martyrdom among the Moors; as a

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. iv. [2] *Ibid.*

Carmelite she made up for her inability to be either priest or missionary, by an apostolate no less necessary and no less fruitful, the apostolate of prayer and penance. "You may say," she writes, "that you have neither the power nor the means to lead souls to God; though you would willingly do so, you do not know how, as you can neither teach nor preach as did the Apostles. . . . You can do much by prayer; do not try to help the whole world, but principally your companions; this work will be all the better because you are the more bound to it. Do you think it is a trifling matter that your humility and mortification, your readiness to serve your sisters, your fervent charity towards them, and your love of God, should be as a fire to enkindle their zeal, and that you should constantly incite them to practise the other virtues? This would be a great work, and one most pleasing to our Lord . . . he would reward you as if you had won him many souls."[1]

What a marvellous change! This Saint, who not long since was consumed with the desire to die in order to hasten the possession of Jesus Christ—and who expressed this desire in the eloquent canticle: *I die because I cannot die!*—is the same who now wishes to live long so that she may labour and suffer for the glory of God: *To suffer or to die!* This transformation, which astonished even herself,[2] this wish to live in order to propagate life, this imperious need of spiritual maternity, is one of the graces of state of the brides of Christ.[3]

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. iv. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] "The most surprising thing to me is that the sorrow and distress which such souls felt because they could not die and enjoy our Lord's presence are now exchanged for as fervent a desire of serving him, of causing him to be praised, and of helping others to the utmost of their power. Not only have they ceased to long for death, but they wish for a long life and most heavy crosses, if such would bring ever so little honour to our Lord. . . . Were nothing else gained by this way of prayer but the knowledge of the special care God takes to communicate himself to us and how he entreats us to abide with him, I think that for the sake of these sweet and penetrating touches of his love all our past pains would be well spent" (*Castle*, 7th M., ch. iii).

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATION FOR CONTEMPLATION

AFTER having treated of the *nature* of contemplation and of its *kinds* or gradual stages, it remains for us to speak of its *preparation*, which is no less extraordinary nor less difficult to understand, and knowledge of which, therefore, is indispensable to the director who has to guide souls through these mysterious ways.

After having admired the heights and glories of the mystical ascension, it now remains for us to describe the *trials*, at times terrible, which God sends to those privileged souls before judging them worthy either of the prayer of quiet or of the more and more intimate and perfect degrees of union.

Logically we ought to have begun our study of contemplation by that of the ways which prepare us for it: the means should come before the end, at least in the order of fulfilment; but in the order of intention and of knowledge the reverse is the case, and it would have been difficult for us to understand the design of such extraordinary ways, without having in view the end to which they lead. It is this end which will enlighten us as to the meaning and import of the means, and, like a polar star, will direct our footsteps through the most obscure paths.

Henceforth we can foresee that, as the end of contemplation is a more and more intimate union with God, it requires as a first condition a complete purification of our fallen nature, by dissociating us more and more rigorously from all that attaches us to ourselves and to creatures, and keeps us at a distance from God. Furthermore, it is pre-eminently just that —save in exceptional cases—our Lord only grants his choicest graces and his highest favours to souls that have already shown themselves generous or even heroic in a series of *providential trials*. In the ordinary way these graces are a reward; we must, therefore, have merited them and given a proof that we are able to drink generously of the chalice of the divine Master: *Potestis bibere calicem quem ego bibiturus sum?*

Consequently the usual preparation for contemplation consists in a series of physical and moral trials, so much the

more prolonged and more terrible as the soul is to be led further and raised higher in the stages of contemplation.

Moreover, as our union with God must be brought about either through our sensitive faculties or through our spiritual faculties, the purification should extend equally to these two parts of our fallen nature. But before treating of the purification of the *senses* and the purification of the *spirit*, we shall indicate in a few words the general mark of these trials, which is passiveness, the character proper to the mystical ways.

§ 1

Passive purifications in general

Active purifications are those that are self-imposed by the soul by an effort of its own activity. By voluntary mortification of the senses, of its moods and its own desires, it reaches—through the grace of God—a detachment, more and more complete, from sin and from affection for all that is evil or imperfect. To the extent that these personal efforts are successful—with the help of the sacraments and other aids to Christian life—the soul rises in the *ordinary* ways of perfection and of asceticism, the three stages of which—the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive life—we have already called to mind.

Here, in the extraordinary ways of perfection or of mysticism, the labour of man no longer suffices. It is indispensable that God himself should put his hand to the work: he is the principal agent in it, and the role of the soul is, above all, that of passive docility. In this it resembles those invalids whose illness, from its nature, requires the intervention of the surgeon. It must resign itself to submit to a painful operation which it cannot itself perform, and must allow itself to be dealt with by the hand of God, who alone can heal it and not only insure its salvation, but make it live a new life altogether divine.

So that the distinctive mark of *involuntary passiveness* is found not only in the different stages of contemplation or of mystical ascension which we have described, but even in the series of purifications which prepare the way for them. This is why the classic name of passive purifications has been bestowed on the purifications with which we are now occupied.

Other expressions are nevertheless used among mystical writers. Thus, St John of the Cross named them spiritual *Nights*. Like the night, indeed, they are independent of our

will, which can neither shorten their duration nor diminish their depth; they are contrary to our nature, instinctively the friend of day and light; they are, above all, filled with anguish and dismay for a timorous soul, that hesitates to pass alone through the darkness, and sometimes thinks itself abandoned by both God and man.

In the same sense a contemporary writer calls them *tunnels* through which the soul must pass on its journey. Like these, they are but passing, however long they may seem to our impatience; and however terrifying they may appear to an inexperienced traveller, there is nothing really formidable in them, provided that the driver of the train has attended properly to the points on the track.

These trials being not only terrifying but, above all, painful for the soul and often for the body, other writers, such as Tauler and Blessed Angela of Foligno, have called them a spiritual *martyrdom*, or again a spiritual *purgatory*, as distressing as that of the other world and perhaps more so; but in any case infinitely more meritorious. And so they have even hoped that the soul, once it has passed through this spiritual purgatory, would no more be subjected to that of the other life.

Be these different appellations what they may, all mystics are unanimous as to the general nature of these passive purifications, and we here give the descriptive *definition* of them which M. Ribet suggests to us, in accordance with Scaramelli :

" Passive purifications are a series of outward and inward afflictions, which fill the soul with anguish, which hand it over to the assaults of concupiscence, of men and of devils, throw it, as it were, into a fiery crucible, which consumes its stains, its carnal instincts, its very life, and out of which it emerges purified, fortified, and shining like gold, animated with a new life, fully yielding to the action and to the inspirations of God."

In a word, they are a series of involuntary and extraordinary pains which complete the subjection of the senses to the mind and that of the mind to God, in order to prepare the soul for the different stages of contemplation.

Let us endeavour to sum up the more general principles of their *severity*, their *intensity*, and their *duration ;* and finally, the principles that should guide a wise director with regard to them.

It is admitted by all mystics, that the *severity of the trials* which God reserves for chosen souls called to such high destinies is extraordinary, like the mystical ways for which

they are a preparation, and has nothing in common with those that suffice for the purification of the ordinary faithful. Their *intensity*, as also their duration, varies so considerably that it is impossible to establish any strict rule, so great is the liberty of God.

Nevertheless, it may be established as a principle that God never tries a soul beyond its strength, aided by grace; and that he usually proportions the means to the end—that is to say, the rigour of the trial to the greatness of the end and to the degree of holiness which he desires it to attain.

" Daughters," says St Teresa, " I assure those of you whom God does not lead by the way of contemplation . . . that those following it do not bear a lighter cross than you: but indeed you would be aghast at the different kinds of trials God sends them. I know a great deal of both vocations, and am well aware that the sufferings God inflicts on contemplatives are of so unbearable a kind that, unless he sustained such souls by the manna of divine consolations, they would find their pains insupportable. God guides those he loves by the way of afflictions; the dearer they are to him, the more severe are their trials. . . . The road he chooses for them is so uneven and rugged as to make them fancy that they have lost their way and that they must turn back again and start afresh. Then his Majesty is obliged to give them some refreshment—water would not be enough, it must be wine: inebriated with this draught from God they become unconscious of their pain and enabled to sustain it."[1]

Some writers think that strong souls are purified in a more intense but also more rapid manner, whilst weaker souls are subjected to less rigorous yet longer trials, but the most authenticated facts do not appear to bear this out strictly.

St Teresa—the very type of a strong woman—passed through eighteen years of trial; St Mary of Egypt, seventeen years; St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, sixteen years; St Clare of Montefalco, fifteen years; Blessed Henry Suso, ten years; St Catherine of Bologna, five years; Blessed Angela of Foligno and St Francis of Assisi, only two years; M. Olier, two years also.

Such figures are truly appalling. Nevertheless, we must not imagine that the trial continues without interruption and without any respite for so many years. Human life, no matter how tenacious, could not stand it. There are, therefore, always

[1] *Way*, ch. xviii.

certain intermissions which allow the soul a little breathing-space to recruit its courage for the renewal of the struggle.

These *interruptions* in the trial may happen in three ways. First of all there is the generous wine of divine consolations of which St Teresa has just spoken; the holy inebriation of these causes the pain to be forgotten, without, however, healing the wound of the soul or body; then there is a real return of the soul and body to the normal state: peace, joy, and ordinary fervour seem to be given back, at least for a time; finally, though more rarely, the soul is raised in these intervals even to acts of contemplation with all their intoxicating delights. Such was the case with St Margaret Mary, who offers a remarkable example of these repeated alternations between high upliftings and terrible abjections in the abyss of suffering and abandonment.

As to the precise moment in the spiritual life when these passive purifications must begin, it is quite impossible for man to say, for it depends entirely on the designs of God. As a matter of fact, the first purification of the senses usually coincides with the first degree of the prayer of quiet; the purifications of the spirit are rather a preparation for the prayer of union or the higher stages. The two trials may, however, sometimes—perhaps more rarely—come together, but the purification of the spirit never comes before that of the senses.

All these diversities in the extraordinary ways of the mystical life make *the help and counsel* of a wise director all the more necessary for these souls. In the midst of these nights or spiritual darknesses, they resemble a blind man who cannot dispense with a friendly hand to guide him, or a ship tossed about by the storm which only an experienced pilot is able to save from shipwreck and guide into port.

Without a good director, says St John of the Cross, these souls run the risk of being led astray or discouraged and of falling back instead of advancing. Here are his own words:

"During the aridities, then, of the night of sense . . . spiritual persons have to endure great afflictions, not so much because of aridity, but because they are afraid that they will be lost on this road; thinking that they are spiritually ruined, and that God has forsaken them, because they find no help or consolation in holy things. Under these circumstances, they weary themselves, and strive, as they were wont, to fix

the powers of the soul with some satisfaction upon some matter of meditation, imagining when they cannot do this, and are conscious of the effort, that they are doing nothing. . . . If they meet with no one who understands the matter, these persons fall away, and abandon the right road; or become weak, or at least put hindrances in the way of their further advancement, because of the great efforts they make to proceed in their former way of meditation, fatiguing their natural powers beyond measure."[1]

St Teresa, with a persistence most worthy to be noted, recommends these poor souls in their distressing trial to choose a director who is both *holy* and *learned;* and should they have only a choice between a man who, though pious, is little enlightened, and one who, though less perfect, is more learned, they ought not to hesitate, she says, to choose him who has the knowledge rather than him who has only the piety.

According to her, the worst directors, to be avoided above all, are those that are but *half instructed.* Our Saint had a long and sad experience of them which she regards as the most cruel trial of her life. . . . At the height of her affliction many of them had the imprudence to think that she was possessed with a devil and ought to be exorcised! She was only saved from their cruel attempts by the intervention of a new director, who was, we believe, none other than St Peter of Alcantara.

The memory of this bitter experience shows itself very often in her writings for the instruction and protection of her dear children. "I have had great experience as to this," she says, "and have also met with timid, half-instructed people whose ignorance has cost me very dear. . . . If your confessor is not very spiritual, a good theologian would be preferable; best of all, one who unites both qualities."[2]

It is true that St Teresa's idea of a "good theologian" was one who combined theoretical knowledge with practical experience. She recalls with a heavy heart "the trial of meeting with so timorous and inexperienced a confessor that nothing seems safe to him; he dreads and suspects everything but the commonplace, especially in a soul in which he detects any imperfection, for he thinks people on whom God bestows such favours must be angels, which is impossible while we live in our bodies. He at once ascribes everything to the devil or melancholy."[3]

Nevertheless, although most desirable, this personal experi-

[1] *Dark Night*, bk. i, ch. x. [2] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. i; 6th M., ch. viii.
[3] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. i.

ence is by no means absolutely needful to a good director, as St Teresa is careful to remark. " In difficult questions," she says, " although I think I understand them and am speaking the truth . . . I am most willing to submit to the judgement of theologians. Although they may not have had personal experience in such matters, yet in some way I do not understand, God who sets them to be lights of his Church enables them to recognize the truth when it is put before them. If they are not thoughtless and indevout, but servants of God, they are never dismayed at his mighty works, knowing perfectly well that it is in his power to perform far greater wonders. If some of the marvels told are new to them, yet they have read of others of the same kind, showing the former to be possible."[1]

Now, the *method of guidance for a wise director*, one who combines piety with knowledge, is not difficult to point out. He ought, above all, to welcome these troubled souls with inexhaustible kindness and patience; listen to them without interruption and without giving any sign of astonishment or embarrassment, in order not to lessen their confidence. Then he should console them and recall to their minds the innumerable motives which we have for never despairing of the goodness of God and for leaving ourselves in his fatherly hands.

Whilst reminding them that the trials of God are always passing, he must be careful not to promise them an early deliverance, for that is the secret of God, and we should be very rash to wish to speak with assurance.

Far less ought he to put these souls in expectation of early favours of contemplation. For not only would the promise of such a reward be indiscreet, but it might expose them to the temptation of a vain complacency in themselves.

Finally, in the more difficult cases, where knowledge is wanting to him, he must not think it a humiliation to have recourse to the enlightenment and counsel of directors possessing greater knowledge and fuller experience.

[1] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. i. Cf. *Life*, ch. v, xxvi, etc.

§ 2

Passive purification of the senses

The term *senses*, as opposed to the *spirit*, signifies, in mystical language, the lower part of the soul—that is to say, all the exterior and interior organic faculties which man possesses in common with the animals, and which are the most ordinary source of his enjoyment or his sufferings. It is the sensible part of our nature which God succeeds in rendering subject to reason and faith by means of a series of struggles and sorrows, which give our souls a distaste for ever for the sensible pleasures and false joys of this world.

The *first* of these trials, that which all the masters of the spiritual life look upon as fundamental, is the loss of all sensible devotion. The first night is the *dryness of the soul*, which induces disgust and desolation. The spiritual sweetness of devotion is an enticement which God uses at the beginning of conversion to gain the sinner and to turn him more effectively from the gross pleasures of sense. Its obvious disadvantage is that beginners, and even souls more advanced in perfection, allured by the charm of these sensible consolations, become attached to them and seek them, and, therefore, seek themselves in seeking the service of God. They love the God of consolations much less than the consolations of God. Whence a danger not only to the purity of divine love, but also to all the other virtues, for, according to the profound observation of St John of the Cross,[1] the seven deadly sins may find therein occasion to gratify themselves: above all, pride and vanity, spiritual sloth and desire for least effort, even to lust, which this spiritual form of sensuality may secretly awaken.

This is true even when these consolations and this spiritual sweetness are only the effect of divine grace, and still more so if they are more the effect of a temperament endowed with an acute and even exaggerated sensitiveness. They may then engender a secret complacency, more nearly approaching sensuality than pure love; so far so that the metaphorical name of spiritual lust might be bestowed on them.

It is then of great consequence that these serious imperfections should be corrected, and that the fire and sword of painful trial should be applied to the root of the evil before preparing a soul

[1] *Dark Night*, bk. i, ch. ii-vii.

for the mystical ascensions of divine love. Now the only means of effecting this is to deprive it of spiritual sweetness and to teach it through tribulation and tears the true way of loving God most purely without any seeking of self-love.

Dryness, however, is very far from being always a sign of providential preparation for the mystical ways. It is more often a simple punishment for repeated unfaithfulness, and the director must be able to recognize it by these two signs.

1. When a soul, distressed at no longer finding any taste for divine things, has no greater attraction for the things of the earth and worldly distractions, it is a true sign that God wishes to detach it from all creatures in order to raise it higher. But if, on the contrary, it finds compensation outside of God, then it is not a trial but a temptation of the devil, or else a punishment for unfaithfulness and neglect of grace: a chastisement analogous to that of those great sinners of whom St Paul speaks, whom the Lord abandons to their depraved senses: *tradidit illos Deus in reprobum sensum.*[1] Indeed, in order to chastise us, God very often has only to leave us alone; and this is true of a people as well as of individuals, for nations are very often punished by their own faults.

2. Furthermore, if the dryness which a soul experiences is accompanied with the constant remembrance of God and the fear of having lost his friendship as well as his sensible favours, this is a sign of a good trial, and certainly not the punishment of lukewarmness, the effect of which is, on the contrary, in addition to distaste for the things of God, an indifference to spiritual joys and loss of the sense of their privation. If the soul suffers through being no longer able to pray, or through being unable to love ardently and feel as before, it is a proof that it is still wounded by divine love; it is a good sign. It would be quite otherwise with a state of dryness to which one ended by resigning oneself, and which inspired no regret nor desire to leave it.

Having thus distinguished the souls which are tried by God from those which he chastises, the good director will endeavour to console them, to encourage them, above all when their tenderness of conscience makes them fear that they are wasting time and no longer meriting in this new state. Patiently borne, on the contrary, it becomes most meritorious and brings them nearer to the heart of God.

[1] *Rom.* i 28.

This distressing state of spiritual dryness would be less dangerous if it were not complicated by another which is sometimes added to it, that of *extraordinary temptations*, aroused either by our evil nature or by the malice or mistake of other men, or by providential events, or even by the devil in person. And here the director must be specially attentive.

This last case of the intervention of the devil is far from being so rare, even in our own days, as some might think. It abounds, on the contrary, in the lives of the saints; St Antony, St Benedict, St Hilarion, St Francis of Assisi, St Teresa, St Catherine of Siena, St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, Blessed Angela of Foligno, St Margaret Mary, the Venerable Mother Agnès de Langeac, the saintly Curé d'Ars, and many others are famous examples of it. All have had to submit more or less to *obsessions of the devil*—never, it is true, to his *possession*, which is not likely to be a prelude to contemplation, both because it does away for a time with freedom and merit and resembles rather a punishment than a trial, and because God will not allow those to be possessed by the devil whom he desires to possess himself.

Even when the devil does not intervene in a sensible and corporal manner, by insulting, striking, or ill-treating the sufferer, his action may become manifest in many ways. For instance, by the unwonted and strange character of certain temptations; as when they are directed by preference towards objects which these souls hold in the greatest horror and are naturally most foreign to them; such are certain temptations to blasphemy, gluttony, and particularly repulsive forms of sensuality. This is an evident sign that they do not come from temperament, but from the malice of the devil.

St Margaret Mary confesses to temptations to gluttony, which are hardly likely, and they are also most rare; the commonest are those of lust and blasphemy. "But this night," writes St John of the Cross, " . . . is attended with heavy trials and temptations of sense of long continuance . . . for to some is sent the angel of Satan, the spirit of impurity, to buffet them with horrible and violent temptations of the flesh, to trouble their minds with filthy thoughts, and their imaginations with representations of sin most vividly depicted; which, at times, becomes an affliction more grievous than death. At other times this night is attended by the spirit of blasphemy; the thoughts and conceptions are overrun with intolerable

blasphemies, which now and then are suggested to the imagination with such violence as almost to break forth in words; this, too, is a heavy affliction."[1]

To the malice of the devil may be added, as regards outward things, that of men or the bitterness of events in order to complete the temptation and incite to despair.

Such are reverses of fortune, the loss of parents and dear friends, or of protectors whose assistance seemed to be indispensable; persecution by evil folk, loss of reputation, thus provoking the hostility of friends, or the suspicion of superiors to whom, nevertheless, we owe obedience and respect. In religious communities, these unjust suspicions, with all the vexation of heart which accompanies them, are perhaps one of the most difficult and painful of trials.

Finally, there are corporal afflictions, illnesses which come and disappear suddenly, whose character is made clear by the fact of their strangeness, which baffles the knowledge of the most learned doctors. This character belongs specially to mystical maladies.

What, in the midst of so many struggles and tribulations, should be the role of a good director?

First of all he will reassure the soul, thus afflicted by these most odious temptations, by reminding it that the human will cannot be defiled by phantoms or involuntary actions. Now the distress which is felt, the horror which is experienced, are a proof, or at least a sufficient presumption, that the core of the will remains united to its God; they are a mute but sufficient protest against the evil. Ought one to go further and add thereto a positive protest? The greater number of directors not only think it useless but do not advise it. To a word of protest, no matter how vehement, God prefers the silence of humility and the tacit but fervent disavowal of the heart. Now this disavowal by a soul is formally contained in the humble and resigned acceptance of such cruel sufferings. That it should suffer from its lamentable state, that it should accept the useful suffering that it has not chosen but that God has chosen for it, that is enough.

Nevertheless, spiritual dryness is not always accompanied by the violent and extraordinary temptations which we have just described. In place of these tumultuous agitations and inward and outward storms, God occasionally sends a trial which is

[1] *Dark Night*, bk. i, ch. xiv.

almost the opposite of them, one which the greater number of writers have called the *vacancy of the spirit*, although it deserves rather the name of absolute vacancy of both senses and spirit, seeing that it affects both these orders of faculties together; it is also as it were a connecting link between the purification of the senses and that of the spirit.

It is a sort of impotence and nothingness which empties the soul of every image, every thought, every desire, of all power of application to the things of God and at times even to the things of material life. So that the soul has no longer to struggle against the furious attacks of the devil, but against the nothingness of its own impotence, that plunges it into an indescribable stupidity, dulness or truly strange aberration. What a trial for pride to find ourselves thus humiliated to a state of annihilation of ourselves and of all that was most personal to us; our thought, our will, our very strength! And how appropriate are the divine remedies to the ills that must be cured in their roots!

St Teresa, who had to submit to this trial, admits that when she was in this state she could neither read nor understand the most simple reading. It seemed to her, she says, that it was Greek or Hebrew. It is clear that this form of impotence, spreading to a great number of our faculties and means of intercourse with other men, may become a source of desolation extremely distressing, because it remains perfectly conscious, and this continued consciousness, in spite of the lost powers, is a state very difficult to explain from the merely natural or physiological point of view.

We shall understand it better by reading M. Olier's description of such an extraordinary trial, which he was obliged to endure for a very long time.

"With the desire to purify me from the motives of pride with which I was attacked," he tells us, "God began by pointing out to me that our body is not at our disposition and that we can neither live, subsist, nor move but through him and by his assistance. This is difficult to conceive unless God teaches it us. . . . But the divine goodness often made me experience it, by sensibly withdrawing from me that vigour of the body and that strength which sustains it. . . . I could no longer walk, and, feeling as though a certain power had been withdrawn from me, if I endeavoured to put one foot before the other I knew not what this power was nor even how to support myself. I was on the point of falling all the time like men overcome by

wine who have strength and do not know how to make use of it. . . . I did not know how to eat and almost lost the habit. I wondered that others could take their food easily. . . .

" What the divine goodness had effected with regard to the corporal faculties happened also to the spiritual faculties of my soul, and that left me in a state of languor, stupidity, and dulness that none who have not experienced it can understand. My good Master has afforded me this grace for a very long time: my mind was surrounded by so great an obscurity that I remembered nothing; I did not even know what I was saying; I heard people speaking as would a deaf man, without retaining or understanding anything; I was unable to express any thought, even concerning things which I had formerly learnt; I sought in my mind and found nothing; often a thought presented itself to my mind and was withdrawn immediately, so that, beginning to express it, I did not know where I was. . . . I remained dumbfounded, with the mind in suspense, rather like what one sees in insane people, who, when they hear people speak, do not understand and answer nothing and remain stupidly staring at everybody. My mother, seeing me in this state, said of me: ' One would say he had become an idiot or insane.' . . . I believed myself to be permanently reduced to this state, and often I whole-heartedly offered myself to God to lose my mind entirely if he so willed it, and to become mad."[1]

To be able to endure such a humiliating trial in so Christian a spirit already bespeaks very great virtue; but who can tell the degree of purity and heroism to which this virtue is quickly raised in the distressing anguish of such impotence! Above all, who can say for what heights of mystical ascension so humble a soul was thus being prepared!

§ 3

Passive purification of the spirit

These new purifications possess great analogy with the preceding, but they differ from them chiefly in that they affect the higher part of the human soul, its spiritual faculties, the understanding, and the will, and therefore assume a still more delicate and painful character. In the same way that the intellectual life surpasses and completes the life of the senses,

[1] *Vie de M. Olier*, by Faillon, vol. i, p. 270.

so the afflictions of the spirit complete those of the senses by intensifying them. The latter end by submitting the senses to the reason, and the former the reason to God, thus destroying all the bonds which would form an obstacle to their union.

This union between a soul and the Word Incarnate—ending in its last stage in spiritual marriage—demands, besides, a certain resemblance between the bride and the Spouse. Now, it is the sign of the cross that here marks this resemblance. It is necessary then that this sacred sign should be most deeply imprinted on the understanding and the will, as well as on the lower faculties, before an alliance can be rendered possible.

Besides, this is the universal law of the supernatural order. Before entering into glory the elect will succeed in realizing this resemblance in purgatory. It is then quite in accordance with justice that purgatory should be anticipated for those chosen souls, for whom at least a foretaste of glory, if not glory itself, is anticipated in this life.

Now this cross is first of all impressed on the understanding and the will by the trial called *spiritual abandonment*, which intensifies and completes that of *spiritual dryness*. This first purification endows the soul with a resemblance to the Saviour dying on the cross, abandoned by God and man, so that he cried: *Deus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?*

How can these poignant sufferings be described? Not only is sensible devotion withdrawn even more radically and completely than in the purification of the senses, but the soul also is a prey to cruel uncertainty as to the friendship of God in its regard. It knows not if it is worthy of love or of hatred, and, thinking itself abandoned, perhaps rejected and accursed, it trembles with fear and becomes wasted away with desolation. Now this is a torment much more cruel than all the trials of the senses. No sufferings of the body are comparable to those of the spiritual soul, especially those of the heart, which is the most sensitive and delicate part of the soul. There is a sadness and a dismay bitter enough to cause death, such as that which our Lord willed to undergo as a model to us: *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem.* And following in his footsteps, St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and all the mystical saints have drunk of this most bitter chalice with which they have become inebriated.

During those moments in which the soul is in agony, says St Teresa, " no consolation reaches it from heaven, and it is not there itself; it wishes for none from earth, and it is not there either; but it is, as it were, crucified between heaven and earth,

enduring its passion: receiving no succour from either. . . . God then so strips it of everything, that do what it may, there is nothing on earth that can be its companion. Neither, indeed, would it wish to have any; it would rather die in that loneliness."[1]

Nevertheless, it must not be thought that the death which would bring this martyrdom to an end would be the dreadful death of despair; far from it! This seeming despair is but one of the forms of love, and the beautiful words of St Teresa may well be repeated in this connection: " O Lord! is anyone plunged so deeply into this living water as to die of it? Could such a thing happen? Yes. This love and desire of God may increase until nature can bear it no longer, and men have perished from this cause. I know some one, to whose aid God came promptly with such abundance of this living water that she was almost drawn out of herself in raptures. Her thirst and growing desire were such that she realized it was quite possible to die of such longing were it not remedied. . . . Sometimes people die of such emotions. What a blessed death!"[2]

Such are the fundamental sufferings of the purgation of the spirit. Moreover, as experience has shown, they are commonly complicated by temptations, the violence of which is frightful, especially against faith, hope, and charity.

First, *temptations against faith.* According to M. Ribet, " It is rare that faith, which is the foundation of the spiritual life, is not subjected to the most terrible assaults. There arise a thousand objections which one feels incapable of solving, either by reason of their subtlety, or because in trials of this sort the mind is reduced to a state of dulness and obscurity that paralyses it. All its activity becomes exhausted by problems and denials, so that the soul seems to succumb and consent to these cruel perplexities of doubt, to which it can only oppose an act of the will, hardly felt. At times the difficulties are concerned with only one definite point of our mysteries, but, coming back unceasingly, they obsess and weary the mind quite as much as temptations which vary as they follow one another. One must have been subjected to such storms in order to understand the full extent of their frightfulness."[3]

In this searching analysis, the writer has described to us

[1] *Life*, ch. xx. [2] *Way*, ch. xx.
[3] *La Mystique*, vol. i, p. 396.

that malady of the soul which is known to pathology under the name of scrupulousness. It is a trouble of the will even more than of the mind; an inability to come to a fixed judgement and to keep to a rule which directs thought and action. This malady, the causes of which are many and very complex, may have some that are natural and come within the domain of medicine, of which certain remedies are, according to our experience, most beneficial, but this does not concern us here. Others of a moral or spiritual order come within the scope of the director of conscience, and we must point them out. Now beyond the ordinary remedies of our holy religion, such as prayer and the sacraments, the best way of dealing with these painful uncertainties is to treat the penitent as though he were a sick person. The director should use all his kindness and authority to persuade him that he is really ill and that he must wait for the morbid crisis to pass in order to discuss and reason out the obscure points of faith.

For the moment he is incapable of all examination, of all effort of the mind, for a violent effort might break its springs. Whilst waiting he must *obey* his spiritual doctor, either by emptying the mind of the thought or of occupying it with objects other than the scruples. Above all, the patient must avoid all discussion, either with himself or with his director, and hold his will, in spite of all the possible wanderings of the imagination, subject to God, and to his director, who is the representative of God. Obedience, in spite of all its repugnance, is the only truly efficacious remedy, until the cure is complete. If the director succeeds in effecting this, the patient is saved, or at least his salvation is assured. Obedience is, besides, the most powerful form of humility with which to disarm the hand of God, that to which he has promised the victory: *Vir obediens loquetur victorias.* Let the patient, then, enter without fear into this perfectly safe way of obedience, for, in accordance with the well-known axiom, in obeying one is rarely deceived and one never sins: *Errare possum, peccare non possum.*

To these temptations against faith are sometimes added those of *hatred of God* and of blasphemy. In souls so pure and so loving, these are a phenomenon so unlikely as evidently to prove an extraneous intervention, that of the devil. At the same time they show that these tempests disturb only the surface of the soul, which, in its innermost depths, remains always

loving and united to God by unbreakable bonds. In this is to be discerned, so to speak, a double personality, a *duplex homo*, the existence of which must not be forgotten by the director lest he should be misled in his judgement.

In the passive purification of the spirit, then, God may allow the devil, after troubling the soul with a thousand scruples and anxieties, to produce therein involuntary upheavals of hatred, which, if not repressed, might burst forth in cries of rage and blasphemy. Under the sway of his obsession the limbs may even begin to form gestures of contempt and anger, and the lips to mumble words of malediction. Patients have been seen, in their paroxysms of revolt, to strike themselves with their own hands, as though to attempt suicide; then suddenly to stop, surprised at the act that they had just performed without knowing it and in spite of themselves, expressing regret and horror at an action which they repudiate.

Examples of this are not rare in the lives of St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, of Blessed Angela of Foligno, of St Teresa herself, and of a great number of other mystical saints. Here is the account given by the last named:

"On another occasion I was tortured for five hours with such terrible pains, such inward and outward sufferings, that it seemed to me as if I could not bear them . . . I am in the habit, when these pains and my bodily suffering are most unendurable, of making interior acts as well as I can, imploring our Lord, if it be his will, to give me patience, and then to let me suffer on, even to the end of the world. So, when I found myself suffering so cruelly, I relieved myself by making those acts and resolutions, in order that I might be able to endure the pain. It pleased our Lord to let me understand that it was the work of Satan; for I saw close beside me a most frightful little negro, gnashing his teeth in despair at losing what he attempted to seize. When I saw him, I laughed, and had no fear; for there were some then present who were helpless, and knew of no means whereby so great a pain could be relieved. My body, head, and arms were violently shaken; I could not help myself: but the worst of all was the interior pain, for I could find no ease in any way. Nor did I dare to ask for holy water, lest those who were with me should be afraid, and find out what the matter really was."[1]

As will be seen from this example, the director should be on his guard against judging such actions too quickly or too

[1] *Life*, ch. xxxi.

severely, for it is a question of patients subjected to the obsession of the devil, whose involuntary gestures may synchronize with a love of God and with an heroic patience.

After temptations against faith and charity, perhaps the most acute are those *against hope*, which may lead almost to the abyss of despair. God then floods the soul with his divine light in order to lay bare to it the ugliness and infinite malice of sin: this light reveals to it with terrifying clearness its infidelities to grace, its ingratitudes, all its numberless faults, even the most secret, as also its slightest imperfections; it makes it realize the depth of its innate corruption and its nothingness. Finally, the God of sanctity himself appears as a severe judge and incorruptible avenger of sin, of which none can remain unpunished.

The soul, seized with horror at this contrast between perfect holiness and limitless corruption, between grandeur and misery, justice and iniquity, knows not where to hide itself. It seems already to hear the terrible sentence and to see the mouth of hell opening beneath its feet. It thinks itself damned, justly and irrevocably damned. This horror and desolation of a soul which thinks itself reprobate, is the most frightful torment that it can endure, so much the more bitter as it is the more loving and the more pure.

"The greatest affliction of the sorrowful soul in this state," says St John of the Cross, "is the thought that God has abandoned it, of which it has no doubt; that he has cast it away into darkness as an abominable thing. . . . For in truth, when the soul is in the pangs of the purgative contemplation, the shadow of death and the pains and torments of hell are most acutely felt—that is, the sense of being without God, being chastised and abandoned in his wrath and heavy displeasure. All this and even more the soul feels now, for a fearful apprehension has come upon it that thus it will be with it for ever. . . . [These feelings] are occasionally felt so acutely that the soul seems to see hell and perdition open before it. Of these are they who go down alive into hell, and have their purgatory in this life; for this is the purgation to be endured there. And thus the soul which passes through this state in the present life, either enters not into purgatory, or is detained there but a moment, for one hour here is of greater profit than many there."[1]

[1] *Dark Night*, bk. ii, ch. vi.

The *remedy* for so great a trial is not, as claimed the false Quietists whom Bossuet so energetically opposed, a stoical and unnatural indifference as to salvation or damnation; but it lies in an increase of love for God, who chastises only to save, and of inviolable confidence in his merciful goodness. This exaggerated fear of damnation coming precisely from this impassioned love of God, how could he damn a soul overflowing with an excess of this love? . . . It is contradictory and impossible, and this reasoning is so simple and so evident that it is easy to convince of it a mind gifted with the least common sense.

We must not forget, however, that the souls with whom we are concerned are poor invalids, unreachable or not easily reached by the most logical arguments. They are carried away and blinded by feeling, and it is by feeling alone that they can be influenced. The remedy, then, consists in suggesting to them —kindly but with authority—sentiments of still more tender love for God and more filial trustfulness, especially in the Blessed Virgin, whose wonderful cures may be brought to mind. Instances abound, among others that of St Francis de Sales, who, tormented by this frightful temptation to despair and thinking himself justly and irrevocably damned, was suddenly delivered from it by the fervour of his prayer at the foot of the black Virgin of St Thomas of Villanova, in the Rue de Sèvres, Paris. After having cited these touching examples—time and again and without wearying—there is nothing left for the director but to pray himself, adding penance to prayer, and to wait with confidence until the grace of God vouchsafes to shorten the trial by restoring calm and peace.

When a soul has at length successfully surmounted all these storms against faith, hope, and charity, and calm appears to have returned to it, with the return to health and the full possession of itself and all its faculties, it is, nevertheless, not a rare thing for there to remain still one *last trial* for it to suffer.

In his flight the devil, thus conquered, may aim at it this Parthian shot: *is the God who has just tried thee so cruelly truly a good and just God?* Such a thought is undoubtedly false, but the doubt which crosses the mind like a flash of lightning may leave a most deep wound there. Hence a temptation to murmuring and impatience against the rigours and apparent injustice of divine Providence. Has not God shown himself cruel, implacable, in thus afflicting a poor creature, guilty no

doubt, but none the less most loving? It is evident that a soul, by yielding to these sentiments of bitterness and complaint, perhaps of anger, might again run the risk of breaking its friendship with God. At the very least it might, through lassitude or disgust, abandon the ways of perfection, because they are so difficult and painful, give up prayer, and content itself with the common mediocrity of so many imperfect Christians.

This, assuredly, is a new temptation no less subtle or less dangerous than the preceding, but one against which the soul is better armed, in that it is assumed that it has returned to calmness and full possession of itself. It may then be reasoned with and *easy arguments* may be found which will raise its morale and its courage by enlightening its mind.

1. First of all, is God so cruel and unjust towards this soul? for instead of allowing it to be tempted beyond its strength he has increased the abundance of his grace with the rigour of the trials, so that it has emerged therefrom victorious and triumphant.

2. Are not such exceptional trials a manifest sign of a divine predilection equally exceptional? for the love of a father is not measured by his weakness and indulgence, but by the care he takes to correct the least faults and to render his child perfect, a model for all and the pride of its parents.

3. Does not this exceptional predilection prove a call to an exceptionally high perfection which ought to be esteemed as an honour and a signal favour?

4. Finally, it suffices for this soul, in order to regain its courage, to recognize within itself the marvellous effects already produced by these trials which have purified it, enlightened it, freed it from all its bonds, inflamed it with holy desires, and drawn it nearer to the heart of God. It has become completely conscious of its worthlessness, its misery, its original impurity; hence a perfect detachment from itself, from all created goods, and an unfettered adherence to that good which is infinite; whence proceeds that powerful and sublime enthusiasm which raises its virtue to the point of heroism, so that it cries with St Teresa: *To suffer or to die!* or with St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: *To suffer, not to die!* or again with St John of the Cross: *To suffer, O my God, and to be despised for thee!*

O blessed suffering, which thus transfigures, ennobles, and makes divine! *O bona crux!* We may truly repeat with St John of the Cross: " O spiritual soul, when thou seest thy desire obscured, thy will arid and constrained, and thy faculties

incapable of any interior act, be not grieved at this, but look upon it rather as a great good, for God is delivering thee from thyself, taking the matter out of thy hands; for however strenuously thou mayest exert thyself, thou wilt never do anything so faultlessly, perfectly, and securely as now—because of the impurity and torpor of thy faculties—when God, taking thee by the hand, is guiding thee in the dark as one that is blind, along a road and to an end thou knowest not, and whither thou couldst never travel by the help of thine own eyes and thine own feet, however strong thou mayest be. . . . The way of suffering is safer, and also more profitable."[1]

It is the royal way of the cross which God chose for his "beloved Son in whom he was well pleased." How then could it be otherwise than that of his brides, called by him to share his life, his mission, his royalty, and to become like him in all things, and even—according to the sublime expression of our Lord so often repeated by St Teresa—to become "one with him"?[2]

The most *noble effect* of the passive purification of the spirit is to detach us not only from all the natural goods of the soul, but also from the *supernatural* goods, for, according to St John of the Cross, attachment to supernatural goods renders union with God as impossible as does attachment to those that are natural.

Here is a statement which may well astonish and frighten us. "How, indeed," says Fr. Ludovic de Besse,[3] "can we detach ourselves from supernatural goods? It is easy to see that the soul will rely on higher goods in order to tear itself away from those that are lower and to renounce them. But on what can it rely when it must needs put away also those higher goods which have been the basis of its former renunciation?"

Is it then an evil, we would add, to be attached to these heavenly gifts, to these choice graces which we receive from the munificence of our heavenly Father, graces which he only grants to his most privileged children? Most certainly we must not undervalue these higher goods, nor disregard their worth and benefit, but the higher they are, the more are

[1] *Dark Night*, bk. ii, ch. xvi.

[2] *Way*, ch. xxxii. Cf. *Castle*, 5th M., ch. iii; 6th M., ch. iv; 7th M., ch. ii, iv, etc.

[3] *Éclaircissements mystiques de Saint Jean de la Croix*, p. 39.

they a danger to our weakness, and it is this that St John of the Cross would impress upon us.

In the second and third books of the *Ascent of Carmel*, while speaking at length and with the greatest esteem of these supernatural goods, graces, enlightenments, consolations, exceptional favours so freely bestowed on souls that are raised to the highest stages of the mystical ways, he constantly points out their grave dangers, of which he thus describes the two most formidable.

The *first*—which his experience as director of souls often revealed—is that it is extremely difficult for a soul which delights in these marks of divine predilection not to feel a sense of vanity, of presumptuous confidence in itself, and even of depreciation of those of its brethren who are less favoured. Very rarely are such souls not tempted to repeat the prayer of the pharisee: " O God, I thank thee that I am not as this publican," so that by our own malice the greatest supernatural blessings would be changed for us to an occasion of sin.

The *second* danger is the negligence of the duties of our state of life, and here again experience shows it to be only too often a reality. The soul, flooded with heavenly consolations, runs the risk of slumbering in the intoxication of these spiritual favours and of forgetting the duties of its profession. In order to awaken such souls from their torpor, St John of the Cross gives them this severe warning: " In the day of judgement God will punish many for sins and errors, with whom he holds familiar intercourse now, and to whom he gives much light and strength: because they are negligent in what they know they ought to do—relying on their converse with him, and disregarding all besides."[1]

It is, then, essential to the high perfection of mystical souls to detach themselves even from the most perfect and the most precious supernatural goods. Not, indeed, by undervaluing them, as we have said, nor by looking upon them with unnatural and stoical indifference, but by subjecting in our hearts the desire and the love of them to the good pleasure of God.

Now, the crowning effect of all these mystical trials, by which God completes, in some chosen souls, the purification of the spirit and will, is precisely the seeking of the good pleasure of God alone in all things. Philosophical reasoning would not suffice to reach it; it needs the hand of God, and the involuntary trials which he sends are the means towards this final transfor-

[1] *Ascent of Carmel*, bk. ii, ch. xxii.

mation of the soul. That divine hand which strikes, overwhelms, and crushes nature, gives it at the same time, even in its trial, the lever which restores and uplifts it to the most perfect higher life: to complete union with the good pleasure of God. Henceforth death bursts forth into life!

St John of the Cross has himself *summed up*, in graceful and poetic imagery, the wonderful effects of all these trials of the senses and the spirit. The soul, he says, is transformed like wood subjected to the extraneous action of fire. "The first action of material fire on fuel is to dry it, to expel from it all water and all moisture. It blackens it at once and soils it, producing a disagreeable smell, and drying it by little and little, makes it light and consumes all its foulness and blackness which are contrary to itself. Finally, having heated and set on fire its outward surface, it transforms the whole into itself, and makes it beautiful as itself. The fuel under these conditions retains neither active nor passive qualities of its own, except bulk and weight, and assumes all the properties and acts of fire. It becomes dry; being dry it glows, and glowing, burns; luminous, it gives light, and burns more quickly than before. All this is the property and effect of fire. It is in this way we have to reason about the divine fire of contemplative love which, before it unites with and transforms the soul into itself, purges away all its contrary qualities. It expels its impurities, blackens it and obscures it, and thus its condition is apparently worse than it was before, more impure and offensive. For while the divine purgation is removing all the evil and vicious humours, which, because so deeply rooted and settled in the soul, were neither seen nor felt, but now, in order to their expulsion and annihilation, are rendered clearly visible in the dim light of the divine contemplation, the soul—though not worse in itself, nor in the sight of God—seeing at last what it never saw before, looks upon itself not only as unworthy of his regard, but even as a loathsome object. . . ."[1]

But St John of the Cross is not only the poet but also the lawgiver of mysticism, and this is how, on the tables of the new law, he has engraved the twelve new commandments with a master's hand:

"1. That thou mayest have pleasure in everything, seek pleasure in nothing.

"2. That thou mayest know everything, seek to know nothing.

[1] *Dark Night*, bk. ii, ch. x.

"3. That thou mayest possess all things, seek to possess nothing.

"4. That thou mayest be everything, seek to be nothing.

"5. That thou mayest attain to that in which thou hast no pleasure, thou must walk there where thou hast no pleasure.

"6. That thou mayest attain to that which thou knowest not, thou must go through that which thou knowest not.

"7. That thou mayest attain to that which thou possessest not, thou must go through that which thou possessest not.

"8. That thou mayest attain to that which thou art not, thou must go through that which thou art not.

"Instructions how not to impede the All:

"1. When thou dwellest upon anything, thou hast ceased to cast thyself upon the All.

"2. Because in order to arrive from all to the All, thou hast to deny thyself wholly in all.

"3. And when thou comest to attain the All, thou must keep it without desiring anything.

"4. Because if thou wilt keep anything with the All, thou hast not thy treasure simply in God."[1]

These twelve verses, according to the testimony of St John of the Cross himself, contain all the teaching of the perfect Christian and all the means for "ascending to the summit of Mount Carmel, which is the high estate of union." They are the *mould* of holiness, into which God causes the privileged soul to enter, willy-nilly, in order to adapt it to the mystical life.

§ 4

Other dangers to be guarded against

The trials preparatory to the higher mystical ways are not the only dangers against which it is necessary to be forearmed.

Even for those who are particularly fitted for contemplation, its practice might be an opening for, and, as history indeed shows, has in fact given rise to, divers abuses from which a wise director will be careful to preserve those entrusted to him.

The extraordinary ways, in fact, are never without danger. As the ordinary ways of faith are protected from dangerous illusions, so are the extraordinary or mystical ways strewn with them. They may be briefly reduced to *five principal perils* for mind and heart.

[1] *Ascent of Carmel*, bk. i, ch. xiii.

1. Those who are impressionable, imaginative, eager for the marvellous and without calmness or balance, may easily mistake their dreams for reality and take all they imagine for truth.[1] They are too easily apt to think that the veil of faith has been torn from their eyes, that the invisible has undoubtedly revealed itself, and that they have attained to its contemplation. Hence *hallucinations* of the senses, of which we shall treat at length. Credulous folk, and those with but little discretion, may be easily duped by their wonderful stories, and, what is more serious, accounts of their supposed visions or revelations, flying from mouth to mouth with the usual exaggerations, end by troubling the peace of the Church, by encouraging unreasonable superstition, or else, by reaction, in unbelief.

2. Even though the grace of contemplation should have really been granted to a soul, there is still another mental danger to be feared, that of thinking that, because such a favour has been vouchsafed, all is won, definitely secured, even to the point of having no further fear as to salvation.

St Teresa, on the contrary, is never tired of warning her contemplative sisters against so *false a security*. We are struck with the frequency with which, again and again, she insists on the *fear* of God and of his dreadful judgements. She thus anticipated the heresy of Molinos, which was to burst forth in the next century, and was already beginning to see light in Spain, which asserted that contemplation brought about a state of complete impeccability, in which the soul, confirmed in grace, would be certain of salvation.

It is easy to understand the baneful consequences of such an error, which incites even the best to a presumptuous confidence leading sooner or later to negligence in the service of God and preparing the way for the most unexpected falls.

3. The danger most to be feared for the mind is *pride*. The more extraordinary the favours with which the soul is endowed, the more indispensable is an increase of deep humility in order to anticipate so human a danger, which even the angels themselves did not all know how to resist: *Quomodo cecidisti Lucifer?* This peril is so great that holy contemplatives have always feared for themselves, not only the outward and marvellous effects of contemplation, which they hid with such

[1] " I know by experience that there are souls which . . . are so absorbed in their own ideas as to feel certain they see whatever their fancy imagines. . . . No attention should be paid to such fancies " (*Castle*, 6th M., ch. ix).

great care, and the mere desire for which seemed to them blameworthy; but also the other inward effects, invisible to the eyes of man. To such an extent is this so that St Teresa and all the mystical writers never allow the desire for it, without many reserves and conditions, although contemplation in itself is the most precious of goods.

4. There are also dangers for the human heart. The first is *attachment to the consolations* of God. The sweet emotions tasted with such abundance in extraordinary contemplation end by becoming an absolute necessity for the soul. It seems that a fountain-head has been discovered which can never be exhausted. As soon as this gift is withdrawn and the spiritual savours yield to dryness and to those trials, terrible at times, through which all contemplative souls must pass in order to achieve their complete purification, they then become anxious, discouraged, and hesitate to follow their Master to his Passion and to Calvary, as though the sweetness and banqueting of the Last Supper ought to last for ever. How great, then, is the cost of humbling themselves beneath the divine hand which chastises and tries them, and of awaiting with patience and resignation the return of divine favours!

5. Finally, there is an even more serious danger for the heart. When, in this mystical commerce with the invisible, feeling is called into play, it may seek for sensible pleasure and satisfaction, which, even for the purest, are not free from danger to virtue; for others—and this was the error of the gnostics of every age—delicate sensitiveness may change to *gross sensuality*, and spiritual inebriation end in fleshly licence which may break all bounds and deify itself. How many startling and unexpected falls have begun in this way![1]

Such abuses, regrettable as they are, must not, however, be laid to the charge of mysticism itself, which has always produced saints and heroes, but to the weakness of human nature, so quick to wander, to relax, and to abuse even the best of things. A good director should be warned of these things and keep always on his guard.

Instead of having to correct such grave abuses, it is better to prevent them by never permitting a departure from the common ways, especially from ordinary meditation, without being quite convinced of the *call of God*.

Now this call shows itself by certain signs, by which it

[1] See *Michel Molinos*, by P. Dudon, S.J.

becomes evident that a soul is sufficiently advanced for a higher form of prayer such as that of quiet.

Of these signs, the three most important have thus been described by St John of the Cross in his *Ascent of Carmel.*

" The *first*," he says, " is when [the spiritual man] finds he cannot meditate nor exert his imagination, nor derive any satisfaction from it, as he was wont to do [always provided this does not arise from his own fault or negligence]. . . . But while he finds sweetness, and is able to meditate as usual, let him not cease therefrom, except when his soul is in peace. . . .

" The *second* is when he sees that he has no inclination to fix the imagination or the senses on particular objects, exterior or interior. I do not mean when the imagination neither comes nor goes—for it is disorderly even in the most complete self-recollection—but only when the soul derives no pleasure from tying it down deliberately to other matters.

" The *third* sign is the most certain of the three—namely, when the soul delights to be alone, waiting lovingly on God, without any particular considerations, in interior peace, quiet, and repose, when the acts and exercises of the understanding, memory, and will, at least discursively—which is the going from one subject to another—have ceased, nothing remaining except that knowledge and attention, general and loving, of which I have spoken, without the particular perception of aught else.

" The spiritual man must have observed these three signs together, at least, before he can venture with safety to abandon the state of meditation for that of the way of spiritual contemplation. It is not enough for him to observe the first without the second, for it may happen that he cannot meditate on the things of God, as before, because of distractions and the absence of due preparation. He must, therefore, have regard to the second sign, and see whether he has no inclination or desire to think of other things. . . . Neither is it sufficient to have observed the first and second sign if we do not also discern the third. For though we cannot meditate or think on the things of God, and have no pleasure either in dwelling upon anything else; yet this may be the effect of melancholy or some other oppression of the brain or the heart, which is wont to produce a certain suspension of our faculties, so that we think upon nothing, nor desire to do so, nor have any inclination thereto, but rather remain in a kind of soothing astonishment. By way of defence against this, we must be

sure of the third sign, which is a loving knowledge and attention in peace, as I have said."[1]

Such, as described by an eminent master of the mystical life, are the common marks and successive indications of the call of God. Without this call, departure from the ordinary ways would be merely rashness and an illusion full of perils: all the perils of false mysticism.[2]

Again, it is important to note that the call referred to by St John of the Cross in the passages just cited, concerns only the first *call to the first stage* of passive contemplation—that is to say, to prayer of quiet. If the number of those chosen for this is relatively rare, that for the higher stages is still more so.

Although every seed contains within itself the promise of later development, nothing determines the date of this development, which may be reserved for heaven, and as a matter of fact, very few mystics are raised on earth beyond this lower stage.

Thus are explained certain apparent contradictions of St Teresa, who sometimes seems to say that almost all the chosen souls whom she brought together in her monastery at Avila are called to passive contemplation, and at other times bitterly complains that they are not raised still higher than quiet.

" It is a great sorrow to me," she exclaims, " because . . . I know that many souls come thus far (to the prayer of quiet), and that those who go farther, as they ought to go, are so few, that I am ashamed to say it."[3]

St Teresa and other mystical saints have often explained the reason for this halt in the mystical ways. The *first* is that it is as often as not the fault of these souls themselves in that they do not correspond with sufficient generosity to grace; but this is not the only nor perhaps the most frequent reason. The *second* is that they lack—too often, alas—a good director, able to guide them. But the *third*, and without doubt the principal reason, is that God, who is the master of his gifts, calls them no higher here on earth.

" Why his Majesty doeth this," says St Teresa, " is, because it is his pleasure, and he doeth it according to his pleasure; . . .

[1] St John of the Cross, *Ascent of Carmel*, bk. ii, ch. xiii.

Hic ponitur vocatio, circa quam tria consideranda sunt. Primo, invitat; secundo, ducatum promittit; tertio, praemium. Dicit ergo " venite." *Hoc ex sola liberalitate divina est, ut ad se trahat* (St Thomas, *in evang. S. Matth.*, c. iv).

[3] *Life*, ch. xv.

in short, the whole matter is as his Majesty wills. He gives his grace to whom he pleases " (*Life*, chaps. xxi and xxii). And St John of the Cross adds: " Though it be true that every soul, according to its measure, great or little, may attain to this union, yet all do not in an equal degree, but only as our Lord shall give unto each; as it is with the blessed in heaven, there some see God more perfectly than others " (*Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. v). It is clear that his goods are his own, and that he wrongs no one by disposing of them as he thinks fit.

It is in this sense that we must understand the words of St Bernard: " Unless I am deceived *few* attain to this perfection in this life. . . . *Many* aspire to this happiness without ever reaching it."[1]

And also these words of St Alphonsus Liguori: " Souls who are led by God into the supernatural ways are, according to St Teresa, very few in number, and we shall see many in heaven who, without these supernatural graces, will be higher in glory than others who have received them."[2]

A good director will never lose sight of this rule for guidance: " All are not fitted for passive contemplation, still less for the higher stages. It would be rash and presumptuous to aspire thereto. It is therefore necessary to know how to wait and to rest content to follow the call of God, if clearly made manifest, without ever forestalling it."

[1] *Sermo tertius de circumcisione*, circa finem.
[2] *Homo apostolicus*, app. i, n. 16.

CONCLUSION

ON THE CONFUSION OF THE TWO WAYS

READERS who have followed us thus far will already have been warned against the *enormous confusion* between the two ways of attaining union with God and sanctity: the *active* or ascetic way and the *passive* or mystical way—a confusion strongly denounced by the Teresian Congress.[1] In order to define these ideas still more closely, we will sum up the essential characters of infused or mystical contemplation, *stricto sensu*, as they were lived and described by St Teresa, which are all lacking in active or acquired contemplation. We will reduce them to seven for greater clearness.

1. Firstly, *conscious and total passivity*, in a first phase " where God does all."

2. It begins by the involuntary and *passive recollection* of all our powers (at the call of the Shepherd).

3. It is continued by the *divine touch* on the heart and spirit.

4. This touch produces the *conscious sensation of the Divine* (by an impression or *species impressa*, indispensable to all sensation): it is an intuition of the presence and action of God revealed to the soul (general revelation).

5. It is accompanied by the progressive *suspension* or ligature, more or less complete, of the powers of the soul, which acquires a new mode of operation.

6. This new mode of knowing may be called *quasi-angelic :* it is a progressive freeing from the fetters of the body.

7. Whence results a *truly experimental knowledge* of the Divine, and a *transparent faith.*

Such are the essential and distinctive characteristics of passive contemplation: they are wholly proper to it. As for the accidental and passing characters, they will fill the second part of this book, such as ecstasies, raptures, particular visions

[1] " In the Mansions of St Teresa, we meet with two completely distinct orders of phenomena: some where the soul *moves itself*, with the help of grace; others where the soul *is moved* supernaturally by God. The former the soul ought to acquire *at all costs ;* the latter the soul can only obtain indirectly, by the exercise of the virtues, especially humility " (Theme VII, 5). See below, Appendix VI.

and revelations, prophecies, interior locutions, stigmata, the gift of miracles, and so on.

Moreover, all these phenomena are preceded and prepared for by the *passive purifications*, so fully described by St John of the Cross. They are as yet no more than a preparation for contemplation, or, if the expression be preferred, contemplation in germ, a kind of dawn of the rising star.

It will also be noted that all these essential phenomena, accidental or preparatory, are drawn from psychological observation. Herein, as Dom Mayer, O.S.B., has so well remarked,[1] the newer mystics after St Teresa are not opposed to the older, but complete them, by adding the little-studied psychological aspect of contemplation to its purely speculative aspect on the nature of habitual grace, the virtues and the gifts.

As for claiming that eminent masters, such as St Teresa and St John of the Cross, could not distinguish the essential marks of contemplation from its accidental or concomitant characters, this is an argument *in extremis* which there is no need to refute. These masters saw perfectly well that the study of the observed psychological characters was indispensable to the understanding of the new manner in which the soul acts, or rather *is moved*, in the mystical ways, and that by neglecting it or treating it as secondary, as is done by the new school, confusion between the active and passive ways, and therefore between acquired and infused contemplation, is easy and even inevitable. And this is a new proof that mysticism must be also, and above all, an experimental science.

It will thus be seen *how dangerous it is, for the direction of souls*, to confuse these two ways, ascetic and mystical, active and passive, by considering them as one and the same way in different stages of holiness more or less advanced.

All the faithful, whom St Paul calls *sancti, vocati sancti*, are called by God to holiness—that is to say, to more and more perfect conformity to his most holy will—by the common and *active* ways and certainly not by the mystical or *passive* ways. Otherwise, all pious souls, without distinction, would have to be allowed to think themselves " called " to the mystical ways, to strive for them with all their might, as they must strive " at all

[1] *Pastor bonus* (Treves), 1920–21, pp. 143-9. " In the soul's new manner of action there is a difference of kind which allows of a definition of the essence of the mystical life."

costs " for sanctity, and thereby we must introduce human activity into the passive ways—a manifest contradiction which has produced all the false mystics. If they are misled, it is by seeking to become passive and calling for " short cuts " to arrive there, even when these " cuts " seem very pious.

Furthermore, when we read in certain contemporary writers that it is impossible to attain to Christian perfection without the passive ways, and that " mystical contemplation is the way by which all souls who have reached high sanctity have passed " —or else that " contemplation being the normal end of the Christian life, souls eager for perfection have the *right* to aspire to it, and their directors *ought* to encourage them thereto "[1]—we are unable to suppress a sense of painful surprise at language so different from that of the saints who have themselves attained to the highest sanctity and have thus the authority of experience.

" Blessed," exclaimed St Francis de Sales, " are those who live a superhuman, *ecstatic* (in the etymological sense, that is) life, raised above themselves, although they be not enraptured above themselves in prayer! Many saints there are in heaven who never were in ecstasy or rapt in contemplation: for how many martyrs and great men and women saints do we not meet with in history who never had any other privilege in their prayer than devotion and fervour?"[2]

And again he adds: " There are most perfect persons to whom our Lord never grants such consolations or such quietness, who do all with the higher part of the soul, who cause their will to die in that of God by sheer effort and with the force of reason: and this death is the *death of the cross*, which is much more noble and more generous than the other."[3]

St Alphonsus Liguori likewise says: " For a soul to become perfect, passive union is not necessary; it is enough for it to achieve active union. . . . Active union is perfect conformity of our will with the divine will, in which, without doubt, consists all the perfection of divine love."[4]

Alvarez de Paz teaches the same doctrine: " All those who are perfect," he writes, " are not raised to perfect contemplation, as I think I have elsewhere stated, because almighty God has other ways by which to make souls holy and perfect."[5]

[1] Lamballe, *La Contemplation*, p. 105; also Saudreau, etc.
[2] *Love of God*, bk. vii, ch. vii.
[3] *Spiritual Colloquies*, 2nd coll.
[4] *Homo apostolicus*, app. i, 16.
[5] *Works*, vol. iii, Part II, ch. iv.

This teaching might have been drawn by Alvarez de Paz, who combined theological knowledge with the highest mystical experience, from the works of St Teresa, if he had known them, for our Saint often insists on the duality of the ways which lead equally to perfection.

" Contemplation," she writes, " is not necessary for salvation nor for earning our eternal reward, nor does anyone here require us to possess it. She who is without it, yet who follows the counsels I have given, will attain great perfection. It may be that she will gain far more merit, as she has to work harder on her own account." She afterwards adds: " Humility, mortification, detachment, and other virtues are the safest; there is no cause for fear, nor need you doubt that you may become as perfect as the greatest contemplatives."[1]

To this excellent common-sense advice, which she insists on elsewhere,[2] our Saint adds the following most instructive remark: that the superiority of the passive ways consists in this, that they are a *short cut* (which does not do away with the main road) by which to arrive at the same end, holiness. " Is it necessary," she writes, " in order to attain to this kind of divine union [of conformity to God's will] for the powers of the soul to be suspended? No; God has many ways of enriching the soul and bringing it to these mansions besides what might be called a *short cut*. But be sure of this, my daughters: in any case, the silkworm [self-love] must die, and it will cost you more in this way. In the former manner this death is facilitated by finding ourselves introduced into a new life; here, on the contrary, we must give ourselves the death-blow. I own that the work will be much harder, but then it will be of higher value, so that your reward will be greater if you come forth victorious; yet there is no doubt it is possible for you to attain this true union with the will of God. *This is the union I have longed for all my life, and that I beg our Lord to grant me:* it is the most certain and the safest."[3] The other, the mystical union, then, is not necessary to sanctity. And it is for this active union, and not for passive union, that she so often counsels us to strive " at all costs."

[1] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xvii.

[2] " When you know or hear of God's bestowing these graces on others, never . . . pray nor desire to be led by this way yourself, though it may appear to you to be very good; indeed, it ought to be highly esteemed and reverenced, yet no one should seek to go by it" (*Castle*, 6th M., ch. ix).

[3] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. iii.

This teaching, which is to be found repeated by all the masters of the spiritual life, was established by Benedict XIV in his masterly treatise on the *Canonization of Saints*, in which he lays down that " many perfect men are canonized by the Church, without the least mention having been made, in their process, of infused contemplation. It is sufficient to have proved the heroism of their virtues and miracles obtained through their intercession."[1]

It is of no use stating, in reply to this, as has been attempted, that, *as a matter of fact*, " *almost* all the canonized saints of the Church have reached to a high degree of contemplation." There is nothing astonishing in this. The Church can only raise to her altars those who are mostly known by the outward radiance of their sanctity—that is to say, by their most marvellous mystical gifts. For the witnesses whom she examines in her processes of canonization can only testify to visible virtue and not to the kind of inward and invisible prayer.

But the Church has always been careful to include with such famous names the multitude of obscure and unknown saints of every land and age, who have followed the common ways, without renown, holding them up equally for our veneration: *Et alibi aliorum plurimorum sanctorum*. . . . The more frequent canonization of mystical saints does not in any way prove that passive contemplation is " the normal end of all spiritual life," nor that it is " essential to the highest sanctity." It is a question of *fact*, not of *right*. Moreover, among a great number of canonized saints, the passive ways, such as ecstasy, appear to be rather an exception, and not the dominant note and cause of their sanctity or canonization.

Prudent directors should ponder on these fundamental truths before endeavouring to force all pious souls, without distinction, into the passive ways. Far from encouraging them, they should, with St Teresa, admonish " certain souls, who desire to fly before God has given them wings,"[2] and remind them that the divine Master, who distributes his gifts as he pleases, does not give mystical wings to all those souls whom he loves or whom he wills to raise to perfection.

As to the mere *desire* for the mystical ways, although in itself it may be good, like all the gifts of God, yet directors should not encourage it without restriction or reserve, so full are

[1] *Opera Omnia*, bk. iii, c. xxvi, 8. See below, *Second Section*, ch. iii.
[2] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. iii.

the extraordinary ways of perils and illusions, as we have already pointed out; at least unless God has clearly made his call heard; and even in this case the saints have feared these gifts, even while they have desired them.

Even after having desired them wisely and after having been prepared for them by the highest perfection in the ordinary ways, if God refuses them we must adore and love the secret designs of his providence. " God," says St John of the Cross, " does not raise to perfect contemplation every one that is tried in the way of the spirit . . . and he alone knoweth why."[1]

This refusal of God, mysterious as it may be, always hides a design of his mercy towards us. St Teresa is never tired of repeating this to her sisters in order to console them and to forewarn them against discouragement.

" If you are not to blame," she told them, " the Lord is just; what he refuses in one way, his majesty will give you in another, as he knows how."[2] " If he does not grant it [contemplation], he is keeping back these consolations in reserve only to give them to us all at once in heaven."[3] Elsewhere she adds: " I repeat that his majesty, being God, knows our weakness and has provided for us. . . . [He has] made many ways of reaching him, just as he has made many mansions." And she repeats again that " his mercy is so great that he hinders no one from drinking of the fountain of life,"[4] which is sanctity; but there are many ways that lead to it. And " he is so good that he will not force us to drink it, but he gives it in many ways to those who try to follow him."[5]

It is not, therefore, for us to choose, or even to desire, of ourselves and without a special call from God, the extraordinary ways, which are always full of peril for our weakness; and the belief that all souls are " called " to them would result in more than one deception.

[1] *Dark Night*, bk. i, ch. ix.
[2] *Castle*, 3rd M. ch. ii.
[3] *Way*, ch. xvii.
[4] *Ibid.*, ch. xx.
[5] *Ibid.*

SECOND SECTION: APOLOGETIC

REPLY TO CONTROVERSIES

Prologue

THE science of mystical theology is passing through a great crisis. It is now in the making, or, to speak more exactly, in the *remaking*.

On every side discussions are being opened, history questioned, ancient texts published, rival reviews issued, and there would appear to be a desire to question the most essential solutions that seemed to have been finally determined.

What, then, has happened ?

Side by side with the ancient school, which was thought to be traditional because it was based on all Catholic tradition—including that of the last three centuries, which seemed to be the normal and legitimate development of those that had gone before—there has arisen, during the last twenty years or so, a new or resuscitated school, that of Fathers Lallemant and Surin,[1] which openly repudiates, as a deplorable deviation, the teaching of the last three centuries, not excepting the masterly codification of it made by Benedict XIV, which re-echoed St Teresa and the Carmelite tradition.

The new tendency is to popularize the mystical or passive ways, which used to be considered exceptional, and to force the greatest number of souls into them as though necessary to sanctity. *The heights of contemplation accessible to all:*[2] such is the impressive sub-title of a work by Fr. Arintero, who has at least the merit of not hiding his colours.

No suspicion of these levelling principles in mysticism had arisen when St Gregory the Great and Dionysius the Carthusian taught that " no one can be raised to contemplation without a special grace," that " temperaments are most unequally endowed," that " all are not fitted, and the people should be prevented from access to the holy mountain ";

[1] Father Surin's *Catechisme spirituel* was retained on the Index in 1900, in spite of powerful influence. It was put on the Index with the Molinosists on July 20, 1695.

[2] Fr. Arintero, O.P., *Cuestiones misticas*, o sea *Las alturas de la Contemplación acesibiles a todos* (Salamanca, 1920).

finally, "that God raises thereto whom he pleases without having to give account of it."[1]

The partisans of the proposed reform, however, are far from being in agreement among themselves respecting its details and extent. If, for instance, they all criticize the writings of the late Frs. de Maumigny and Poulain, the last representatives of the earlier school, it is neither on the same points nor from the same motives. Thus, to cite but the three writers most to the fore—though, it is true, of very unequal weight—Canon Saudreau, aumônier at Angers; Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Professor at the Collegio Angelico; and Fr. Arintero, O.P., Professor at Salamanca—the last named does not hesitate to state that he inclines more to Fr. Poulain than to M. Saudreau,[2] whilst Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, on the contrary, writes that he is nearer to M. Saudreau than to Fr. Poulain. But no one of them would be willing to subscribe to all the theses of the other two partisans of the reform.

Amid so great a conflict of opinions, it was natural that the Press should become the echo of various appreciations of this book. We were expecting it, and if we have had a surprise—a most gratifying one—it is to have met with so many warm friends and allies;[3] it is particularly gratifying to have received from one of our three adversaries, the sympathetic Fr. Arintero, weapons so powerful for resisting the two others, that we shall easily uphold all our positions, as the reader will be able to judge.

[1] *Sine gratia speciali nullus ad contemplationem contingere potest, dicit Gregorius . . . Ut docet Gregorius, valde inter se diversae sunt conspersiones animorum . . . non omnes apti sunt ad contemplationem . . . populus a montis accessu prohibetur . . .* (Dionysius the Carthusian, *De contempl.*, bk. i, art. 15, Tornaci, 1912, vol. 41, p. 151; art. 23, p. 161).—*Ad mysticam contemplationem Deus quos vult perducit . . . cujus vult miseretur . . . cui nemo dicere potest : cur ita facis ?* (*De fonte lucis, ibid.*, p. 115).

[2] *Cuestiones misticas*, 2nd ed., pp. 63, 51, etc.

[3] It is not possible to mention them all here, but we are especially grateful to MM. Tanquerey and Berrue, of St Sulpice; to Mgr. Chollet, Archbishop of Cambrai; to Dom Lehodey, of Bricquebec Abbey; to Mgr. Lejeune, Archpriest of Charleville (*Revue de Philosophie*, April, 1921); to Fr. Bainvel, Dean of Theology at the Catholic University of Paris (*Revue pratique d'Apologétique*); to Fr. Roure (*Études des Pères Jésuites*); to Fr. de Guibert (*Revue d'Ascét. et de Myst.*); to Fr. Maréchal (*Revue des quest. scientif.*); to Fr. Watrigant, etc. Their very special competence in mysticism gives their valuable support an indisputable authority.

For the sake of greater clearness in this labyrinth we shall reduce all our answers to the controversies aroused regarding our book to a small number of questions, whose logical connection will be easily grasped by the reader.

(1) What is the mystical problem? (2) The authority of Benedict XIV. (3) The classification of the common teaching of theologians by Benedict XIV.

After dealing with these three more or less preliminary subjects we shall then pass on to the heart of the debate. (4) The great ambiguity: confusion between acquired and infused contemplation. (5) Is knowledge in infused contemplation different in degree or in kind? (6) Is it analogous to angelic contemplation? (7) Is the "intermediate" perception of God an "invention" of Fr. Poulain? (8) Is all immediate perception of God impossible? (9) How can this immediate perception be brought about? (10) The five spiritual senses. (11) Is it possible to dispense with impressed infused species? (12) An old objection against the immediate perception of God. (13) Is there a love without knowledge? (14) Is infused contemplation accessible to all?[1]

After these developments, which are mostly new, our *conclusion* will be brief.

It will be admitted that it is impossible to touch on all these subjects without entering upon controversy with living confrères. But a little polemical discussion is not always a bad thing. As we have avoided it so far in accordance with the seriousness and calm required in a didactic treatise, so we now willingly take it up in a separate section of this first part of our work.

We will put all violent discussions far from us: they are a sin against the light, for they fail to enlighten the adversary and render blind those who make use of them. As long as it remains calm and courteous, discussion may, on the contrary, by a loyal conflict of ideas, bring writers to a greater precision of expression or thought, and may even correct these, for the greater good of truth and the greater glory of God. We are about to make an attempt, having at heart one sole wish, the reaching of that final agreement which is so much to be desired.

Such agreement appears to us to be the more possible in that

[1] There are many other *possible* controversies. A logical classification of them may be seen in the article by Fr. de Guibert: *À propos de la contemplation mystique* (*Revue d'ascét. et de myst.*, October 1920, pp. 329-351). We restrict ourselves here to the fundamental questions.

on more than one point the difference seems to be chiefly one of language. Thus M. Saudreau—as we hope to explain at greater length—by not understanding infused contemplation in the same sense as Benedict XIV and ourselves, makes his mysticism end almost at the point where ours begins. His opposition, then, is more apparent than real: there is a misunderstanding.

This ray of hope, then, will open a way of advance and strengthen our footsteps.

From the start we would warn the reader not to confuse *contemplation* and *mystical states*. Contemplation is the central and essential phenomenon of mystical states, but the latter also include all phenomena, whatever their nature may be, psychological, physiological, and even physical, which may *prepare*, *accompany*, or immediately *follow* contemplation. Each of them demands a special definition. Thus the *experimental or conscious sensation of the divine*, required for a *well-defined* act of contemplation, is not at all necessary for preparatory or feeble mystical states, such as trials and passive purifications or mystical aridity. The confusion between these ideas is too often the occasion of regrettable misunderstandings.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS THE MYSTICAL PROBLEM?

LET us begin by casting a synthetic glance over the whole of the debate in order to throw better light on it and to regulate the analysis of each of its divisions which follows more surely.

The great problem in mysticism which dominates all others is not to know if there be contemplative states in the spiritual life characterized by the *predominance*, in different degrees, of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in which the soul is more passive than active—that is granted by all—but to know if there be not, side by side with them or over and above them, certain very different contemplative states, characterized by a new *entirely passive* element, in which "God does all," as St Teresa says, and in which grace is no longer only *co-operative*, or *operating with us*, but *operative alone*,[1] at least for a few rapid moments, after which this entirely passive but freely accepted divine touch becomes the powerful mainspring of still more generous and meritorious vital acts. Such, according to our thesis, are the states of infused contemplation, and in general all the mystic states.

Now, we believe that the answer to this fundamental question belongs to the sphere of most intimate psychological observation, and in no way to that of *a priori* reasonings as to the nature of the virtues and the gifts. We must, therefore, appeal to direct or indirect observation—that is to say, to the witness of the mystical saints who have experienced these states, carefully discarding the vague statements of those who had no intention of answering the question or even no thought of asking it. These negative witnesses—that have been so vaunted—do not even

[1] *Cf.* St Thomas, I-II, q. ix, a. 6, ad 3; q. lxviii, a. 2; q. cxi, a. 2; III, q. xxxiv, a. 3. To reply, as is done in the *Vie spirituelle* (November, 1921, p. 86), that "this would no longer be a vital, free, and meritorious act," is too superficial. It is enough for it to be the mainspring of vital, free, and meritorious acts. Thus, the wholly passive infusion of intelligible species, far from suppressing it, immediately incites to the vital, free, and meritorious act of contemplation. Even more, simple acquiescence is sufficient indirectly to render a purely passive state of soul meritorious.

count. On the other hand, the evidence of all those who have understood the problem and have been careful to state precisely the distinction from experience, must be retained.

Now these latter witnesses are legion. It is they who have inspired the common teaching of theologians, at least for more than three centuries, and Benedict XIV took the pains to codify their doctrine.

The preliminary exclusion by the new school of a method of contemplation characterized by an *entirely passive* element—the nature of which we shall seek later—would not appear to be imposed upon us either by experience or by the teaching of the Church: it is only a gratuitous assumption. What, then, must be the theological prejudice which assumes this at the starting-point, as though it were an indisputable principle in the new school?

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, at the end of one of his articles in the *Vie spirituelle* (January, 1922, p. 270), has been so good as to admit this, for which we thank him. He starts from the theory of St Thomas on the nature of the virtues and the gifts—or rather from an interpretation of this theory—which interpretation has been rejected by eminent Thomists such as Cardinal Billot, to whom he refers us—and argues thus:

Granting that the ordinary functioning of the gifts is an intimate blend of divine and human activity in which that of God is always more or less predominant, it appears to Fr. Lagrange that it is only possible to admit *degrees* in this blend, for if there were sometimes total passiveness, the *mode* or even the nature of the gifts would be changed: which is "*impossible*." So, according to him, an element of total passiveness cannot exist. "It is clear," he says, "that each gift cannot have two modes distinct with a distinction not only of *degree* but of *nature;* there would exist two *habitus*, specifically distinct, and no matter to what extent the first developed it would never attain to the second" (*ibid.*, p. 270).

Here, it seems to me, we have the *a priori* caught in the very act![1]

[1] How much wiser are these words of Fr. Arintero: "For my part, I have a great repugnance to making scholastic classifications of those mystical ideas which the masters preferred to leave as they felt them. So much the more, as you so rightly say, that God has infinitely varied modes of communicating himself to souls, which do not enter into our formulas, and which from that very fact might appear impossible to those who have not experienced them" (Letter, April 4, 1921). A splendid maxim if adhered to faithfully! . .

On the contrary, Cardinal Billot finds no difficulty whatever in admitting in the exercise of the gifts not only divers *degrees* but also different *modes*, the one ordinary, the other extraordinary and preternatural.[1] Indeed, since the gift is a *tractableness* or pliancy beneath the action of actual grace, this grace may have different modes of working without the nature of the gifts being changed. Here *a priori* reasoning should be silent and leave to experience the settlement of the debate (see Appendix II).

The antagonistic consequences of these two starting-points are already obvious. If we admit, with Cardinal Billot, that mystical contemplation is essentially not an eminent operation, but rather an extraordinary and preternatural mode of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, it is then not necessary to sanctity, and all should not claim it or think themselves called to it. The contrary opinion implies an inverse proposition, which, by laying down, in spite of everyday experience, the famous thesis, *the heights of contemplation are accessible to all*, places itself in an unenviable position.

We do not wish to disguise the fact that there has been progress during the centuries, especially since St Teresa and her disciple St John of the Cross, in the teaching of mysticism. According to St Thomas, progress is the very life of dogmatic theology, the object of which is to reason respecting revealed dogma.[2] How much more ought it to be so with mystical theology, which is, above all, a science of observation, as we have already shown.

On the often loose, superficial, and incomplete descriptions of the greater part of their forerunners, these two incomparable mystics threw wonderful light, and brought precision of statement to bear on facts that were so difficult to analyse and so mysterious. Vague tradition is left behind, and we are able to draw a distinction between more or less confused

[1] Card. Billot, *De virtutibus infusis*, p. 185 (ed. 1901). *Alius est modus, isque plane extraordinarius. . . ad sublimem etiam sanctitatem nequaquam necessarius* . . . (See further on, p. 625, the argument used by the learned Cardinal.)

[2] St Thomas insists on progress in the precise statement of terms: *Contra errores Graecorum, Opusc. I., proœmium.* It is the birth of heresies that has produced the precise defining of doctrine in order to shut out abuses. The first Fathers or theologians then were not able to speak with the precision of to-day, not having foreseen these abuses. " We ought not," says St. Thomas, " to despise or reject their doctrine on that account, but explain it with respect " (*ibid.*).

psychological states which border on each other; we ask new questions which were not even suspected, and finally we enter on a period of scientific progress which—without in any way contradicting ancient beliefs—defines them, completes them, and states them afresh.

But these developments in mystical theology, above all during the last three centuries—constantly subject to the control of the Church and rejoicing in the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit—are henceforth embodied in tradition and have a share in its authority. It is one and indivisible! Indeed, what confidence would it deserve if the *common* teaching—that is, the practically unanimous teaching of theologians for centuries—could be suspected of heresy or error? Tradition could not be cut up in this way into different periods, some true, others false, without being ruined from top to bottom!

Now such would seem to be the claim of the new school to repudiate the advance made during the last three centuries and to send us back to before the sixteenth! This claim is the more audacious in that, under a prudently vague reference to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which are openly rejected as "pseudo-traditional," they thinly disguise venerable names, the authority of which they dare not openly deny, especially those of Benedict XIV and of St Teresa, whom Benedict XIV faithfully re-echoed, in his summary of her most pure doctrine, as it was commonly understood and taught by her contemporary and subsequent theologians.

As Fr. de Guibert has well—and most courageously—said, "*St Teresa dominates and remains the centre of the debate*, and it is not by accident that the controversy in its present form began precisely at the time when her writings became known in France through the theologians."[1] One is forced, we think, without admitting it, to be *either for or against* her teaching: for or against the *two ways*, active and passive.

Moreover, the official organ of the Carmelite tradition, the *Revue carmélitaine*, from its reappearance in 1920 after an interruption of some years, has protested, with an energy and even a vehemence which can be explained by so prolonged an endurance of obligatory silence,[2] against the new theses of

[1] De Guibert, *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, April, 1921, pp. 178 *ff.*

[2] Fr. Marie-Joseph (*Études carmélitaines*, January, 1920) writes: "For a long time we have been grieved to see their writings (Saudreau and Lamballe) spreading themselves in our Carmelite monasteries,

Fr. Lamballe and of M. Saudreau. Henceforward, therefore, ambiguity must cease: it is a question of being for or against St Teresa, for or against Benedict XIV, who, we once more repeat, did but codify her teaching according to that common to the theologians of her time.

This authority of Benedict XIV, re-echoing that of St Teresa —sanctioned by the constant practice of the Church for three centuries—seems so important and exceptionally significant a fact, that we must be permitted to insist on its study in the next two chapters before entering on the gist of our subject.

With regard to the placing of the mystical teaching of the last three centuries in opposition with that of the centuries which preceded them, there has just appeared a *Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne*,[1] from the time of our Lord, throughout the middle ages, till to-day—a work of immense erudition, from the masterly pen of M. Pourrat, Superior of the Grand Séminaire de Lyon—which has done full justice to such a pretension.

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insinuating incorrect doctrine into divers minds, with forgetfulness if not contempt of our ancient writers, as though they alone, the writers of to-day, had at length discovered the truth as to mysticism. By way of novelty in a subject so often contested, on their own authority, they correct the teaching hitherto received . . ." (p. 36). "The reading of the works of M. Saudreau leaves the impression that he has discovered authentic mysticism . . . if the love of truth will let pass the book he has published on *The Mystical State*" (p. 39). "In quite good faith they are fighting against mysticism, while thinking to serve it" (p. 5), and so on.

[1] Eng. trans., *Christian Spirituality* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne).

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHORITY OF BENEDICT XIV

ONE of the authorities most embarrassing to our adversaries, because we invoke it unceasingly against them —an authority which no good Catholic has a right to reject, still less to despise—is that of the very learned Pope Benedict XIV.

In his monumental work, *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et canonisatione*, which has so often been republished, and is the recognized authority in processes for the canonization of saints, because it sums up the ancient and continuous tradition of the Church until his time, Benedict XIV thought it desirable to include a whole doctrinal treatise on contemplation, intended, as he himself tells us, to be a compendium or catechism, summing up the common teaching of theologians, for the use of the Consultors of the Sacred Congregation of Rites : *Haec eo animo Nobis scripta sunt ut Consultores Congregationis Sacrae Rituum aliquid compendium prae oculis habere possint.* " In view," he adds, " of the difficult questions concerning contemplation that suggest themselves not only in the processes of contemplative saints, but also in those of saints who are not contemplatives " : *Cum sermo de meditatione et contemplatione non solum se offerat in causis servorum Dei contemplativorum, sed etiam in causis aliorum qui non fuerunt contemplativi* (*ibid.*, l. III, ch. 26, no. 8).

Doubtless this document, authoritative as it is, does not directly come within the scope of papal infallibility; not only as regards scientific and medical matters such as preternatural healing—that goes without saying—but also as to purely doctrinal matters. This the more so as it was published for the first time by Cardinal Lambertini in 1734, six years before he was raised to the position of Supreme Pontiff, while still Archbishop of Bologna and Promoter of the Faith, high functions which he exercised for thirty years with consummate knowledge and experience.

But though Benedict XIV does not speak *ex cathedra*, it cannot be denied that he speaks as an authorized and faithful *witness* to the *common* teaching of theologians of his time, of

whom he declares himself to be but the echo: *theologi docent*, he constantly repeats, *theologi docent* . . . and as Cardinal Brancati de Laurea, to whom he gives preference in his quotations on account of the clearness, depth, and accuracy of his doctrine, also states: *est communis sententia inter theologos et mysticos*.[1] This is enough to enable us to conclude that far from expressing merely personal opinions, Benedict XIV desired to formulate or codify the teaching then common in the Church: how imprudent, then, it must be to turn aside from it.

Still more imprudent is it to turn aside from certain fundamental principles laid down by Benedict XIV which the constant practice of the Church in the canonization of saints has definitely sanctioned. Thus, for example, the tribunal ought only to judge of the sanctity of its candidates by their heroic degree of virtue, not by their mystical contemplation. The latter, then, is certainly not indispensable to sanctity, whatever the new school may say. It is not even admitted as a proof of sanctity; it is, on the contrary, the sanctity, when once proved, that authenticates the ecstasy and other mystical states. Here, then, we have an official criterion that is somewhat embarrassing for our opponents.

In order to weaken this embarrassing authority, which by preference is usually ignored, M. Saudreau conceived the idea (*La Vie spirituelle*, March, 1921, p. 465) of arming himself against Benedict XIV with a letter from this same Pope written to an assumed opponent Fr. Catalayud, of the Oratory of Valencia, from which he ventures to conclude that Benedict XIV had almost disavowed his own teaching as to contemplation, or at least admitted that it was, in his opinion, debatable and that he "did not hold greatly to it." If this statement were exact it would be serious, so, in spite of its entire unlikelihood, we had the curiosity to refer to the actual text of this letter—not to be discovered in France—which the kindness of Fr. Arintero ended by finding in a Spanish library (see Appendix II).

On reading it, three conclusions stand out clearly:

1. It is merely a formal acknowledgement of a book sent with the author's compliments, such as are often put aside unread—that is to say, a document of no importance: moreover, it has been omitted from all the collections of letters of Benedict XIV recently published at Friburg in 1884 and at Paris in 1912.

[1] Card. Brancati, *De oratione christiana*, p. 387.

2. Benedict formally states in it that he has not had leisure to peruse the said work, of which he does not even mention the title. But he praises the intentions of the author, who claims to reproduce therein the doctrine of St Thomas.

3. Finally, the author, having excused himself for being of a different opinion on a certain point, Benedict XIV courteously reassures him in these words: " In regard to that which concerns your manner *of interpreting the character of certain miraculous facts*, which differs from our own, that should not trouble either you or us: papal infallibility is not here involved in our personal opinions. . . ." *In eo quod attinet ad nonnullorum miraculorum indolem*, in cujus explicatione a nobis scriptis recessisti, nec tibi nec nobis grave esse debet. . . .

That most essential part of the phrase—which we have italicized, but which, doubtless through carelessness, has been omitted by M. Saudreau—has not in view, in order to excuse it, a disagreement as to the nature of contemplation, but—what is a very different thing—a disagreement as to the interpretation or the character of certain facts reputed as miraculous, which critics always remain free to dispute, even after an act of canonization, so long as they do not form part of the deposit of revelation. This freedom is accorded them by all theologians and teaches us nothing new.

It would, then, be a strange misuse of this letter of Benedict XIV to see in it either a disavowal or an attenuation of his teaching on contemplation. To insinuate that Benedict XIV " did not greatly hold to it " is a mis-statement sufficiently denied by the fact that during his pontificate his work was re-edited at least twice, by his order and under his direction—without excluding from it the famous treatise on contemplation, reproduced in full without correction or alteration—notably at Padua in 1743, and then at Rome itself in 1748, in the well-known edition of Fr. Em. de Azeveda, S.J. Benedict XIV then " held " to his important treatise much more than we might be led to believe.

By this most dangerous argument M. Saudreau shows only one thing: the admission that he finds Benedict XIV singularly embarrassing. It is usually deemed more prudent to pass him over in silence, which is one more reason why he should not be allowed to remain hidden, but be brought well into the light.

CHAPTER III

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE COMMON TEACHING OF THEOLOGIANS BY BENEDICT XIV

THE doctrine as to contemplation, which Benedict XIV declares to be the common teaching of theologians, is expounded in the third book of his famous work *De servorum Dei beatificatione*, especially in Chapters XXV and XXVI.[1]

After summing up the catechetical ideas as to the nature and necessity of prayer in general, Benedict XIV calls to mind its division into vocal and mental prayer, which latter is subdivided into meditation and contemplation. Meditation multiplies acts of reasoning and affection on some definite subject; contemplation tends to simplify them more and more until they become a loving *simple regard* in which the mind and heart are at rest. This is the *simplex intuitus* of which St Thomas so often speaks.

All this is elementary, but now the teaching becomes lifted to a higher sphere, and it is here that it meets with the opposition of the Saudreau school.

According to the mystics, continues Benedict XIV, there are two kinds of contemplation. One is *active* or *acquired* through spiritual exercises; the other is *passive* or *infused* by a special favour from God, and this is called mystical theology. *Praenotandum est duplicem a mysticis speciem contemplationis assignari*, acquisitam *videlicet et* infusam . . . *ex speciali Dei favore* . . . *et contemplationem infusam appellari mysticam theologiam* (*ibid.*, ch. xxvi, n. 7, edit. Prati, 1840, vol. iii, p. 296).

It will be noted that this teaching is a re-echo of that of St Teresa, who repeats, "here God does all"; it is the "short cut." It is "the garden watered by heaven without any gardener's labour"; it is "what I believe is called mystical theology."

Benedict XIV afterwards defined or rather described it in

[1] M. Henri Joly rightly says: "His great work is not so much a collection of rules imposed by authority for the recognition of sanctity, as an experimental treatise on what has been gradually revealed to the doctors and rulers of the Church by the action of Christianity upon succeeding generations and by the spontaneous development of sanctity. It has therefore an historical and psychological as well as a dogmatic interest" (*Psychology of the Saints*, English edition, p. 25, n.).

these terms: it is a simple and loving intuition of divine things and revealed mysteries, which proceeds from God, who adapts the intellect *in a special* (or extraordinary) *way* to contemplate and the will to love. *Simplex intellectualis intuitus cum sapida dilectione divinorum aliorumque revelatorum, procedens a Deo* speciali modo *applicante intellectum ad intuendum et voluntatem ad intelligendum ea revelata* (*ibid.*, n. 7).

This " special way," which is raised beyond man's ordinary way of obtaining knowledge, produces a knowledge of God which may be called *experimental* or concrete, as opposed to abstractive knowledge by means of images or abstract ideas, and by analogy with sensation: *appellari cognitionem Dei experimentalem.*

The instruments that God uses, adds Benedict XIV, are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gifts of understanding and wisdom, but they are set in motion in a special way, *speciali modo.* The first uncovers and lays bare that which lies hidden beneath the veils of faith, as the understanding discovers substance beneath accidents and truth beneath figure. The second, wisdom, *quasi sapida scientia*, enables the savour of truth thus discovered to be relished.[1]

After having thus clearly established the distinction between the two ways of *active* or acquired and *passive* or infused contemplation, he proceeds to expound for us their resemblances and the essential difference that lies between them.

Theologians teach, he says (*ibid.*, n. 7), that there are several points of resemblance between acquired and infused contemplation. Both require certain moral dispositions . . . but they first of all differ in this, that in the ordinary way infused contemplation demands much more perfect dispositions than acquired: it is more frequently therefore the prerogative of the perfect.

Again, while the habit of acquired or ordinary contemplation is only reached with great labour and after long years of sustained effort in spiritual exercises, infused or passive contemplation comes abruptly without any labour or preparatory study; the soul, suddenly freed from all outside

[1] *Proprium est doni intellectus cognoscere supernaturalia, quae latent in revelatis, quemadmodum humani intellectus proprium est sub accidentibus cognoscere naturam rei substantialis, sub verbis significationem verborum, sub similitudinibus et figuris figuratam veritatem* (II-II, q. viii, a. 1). *De dono Sapientiae scribit: Haec proprie dicitur Sapientia, quasi sapida scientia, secundum illud Ecclesiastici,* vi, 23 (I, q. xliii, a. 5)

preoccupation, finds itself all at once lifted by God to the intuition, love, and enjoyment of a supernatural object revealed by him.

Finally—and this is the main point—whilst in acquired contemplation the soul can only have better knowledge of what it already knows through reason and faith, search more deeply into it and assimilate it more fully, in infused contemplation God shows himself *in a new way:* either the same revealed objects are enriched with new details and new depths, or else entirely new things are revealed which were not known before, thanks to the infusion of new species, *novas eorum species infundendo.*[1] Hence the surprise and astonishment experienced by all those who enter into the mystical and passive ways.

Thus, let it be well noted, Benedict XIV only gives the name infused contemplation to that of which the intelligible species are either wholly, or at least in part, new and infused. So that the *light* of the gifts of understanding and wisdom which sufficed for prayer of simplicity or ordinary contemplation, which is content to admire or to probe more deeply into that which is already known—and, as St Thomas says, to form therefore a better judgement of it: *illuminatur intellectus ad judicandum*[2]—is no longer sufficient for extraordinary contemplation, which, in order to discover something new, such as the "great darkness" in which God reveals his presence, requires a second element, the infusion of *impressed species*. This is also the formal teaching of St Thomas. Speaking of the first contemplative he says: *Indigebat* (Adam) DUPLICI MEDIO, *scilicet medio quod est similitudo Dei* (species impressa) *et quod est lumen elevans vel dirigens mentem* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 1). *Indigebat medio quod est quasi* species *rei visae; quia per aliquod spiritale* lumen *menti hominis influxum divinitus, quod erat quasi similitudo expressa lucis increatae, Deum videbat* (*ibid.*).

[1] *Theologi docent in pluribus convenire contemplationem infusam et acquisitam et in pluribus differre: convenire in aliquibus subjectorum dispositionibus . . . differre vero, cum infusa* (*regulariter loquendo*) *requirat in subjecto contemplante multo plures dispositiones quam acquisita . . cum deinde in acquisita homo multo labore et summa difficultate . . . at in infusa sine suo labore aut studio, abjectis omnibus aliarum rerum cogitationibus, a Deo elevetur ad intuitum, amorem et dilectionem objecti revelati. Praeterea cum per acquisitam non cognoscantur alia objecta, nisi ea, quae antea per fidem erant credita; per infusam vero Deus non solum ea ostendat, quae antea fuerunt credita, sed vel ea ostendat cum novis circumstantiis et perfectionibus, vel nova objecta revelet, novas eorum species infundendo* (*ibid.*, no. 7).

[2] II-II, q. clxxiii, a. 2.

In this St Thomas remains faithful to his psychology. The simple regard, *simplex intuitus*, of the same object or from the same point of view—without abstraction, comparison, or reasoning—may affect the judgement, but cannot be an instrument for fresh discovery. On the contrary, it becomes so with the infusion of new species. Also he calls infused contemplation an internal *revelation* or *inspiration*, since in it God reveals himself present to the soul and acting therein: *revelatio, inspiratio interna* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 2, c., etc.).[1]

Finally, as we shall see further on (Chapter IX), the conscious *passivity* which characterizes contemplation properly so-called, would be unintelligible without an impression, or *impressed species*, corresponding to the action received. Now, this species always reveals something, if only the action itself and the presence within us of the divine Agent, whose essence remains unknown, and who may himself become the revealer of deeper mysteries in the higher degrees of contemplation.

This way of knowing, through the *impression of the divine action* within us, or spiritual sensation—*patiens divina*, *πάθων θεία*—and no longer by concepts laboriously abstracted from sensible images, is also outside the logical rules of the human mode: hence the suspicions which it engenders and the enthusiasm which it creates. It is thus analogous to the manner in which the higher spirits and the holy angels possess knowledge,[2] and if Benedict XIV omits to say so in this passage, he does not forget to recall a little later on that the prayer of St Teresa (with the four last *Moradas*) was certainly of angelic nature: *procul dubio angelica* (*ibid.*, no. 9).

[1] Card. Billot professes the same doctrine: *Alius est modus, isque plane extraordinarius . . . nequaquam ad sublimem etiam sanctitatem necessarius . . . hoc est in oratione quietis, unionis simplicis, unionis exstaticae et unionis consummatae; quae sub nomine generico contemplationis infusae veniunt . . . Operatio intellectus pendet ex duobus: primo ex lumine intellectuali, deinde ex specie intelligibili . . . Hic igitur Spiritus Sanctus non solum praedeterminat mentem ad intelligendum secundum lumen speciale doni . . . verum etiam sua operatione immediata species ipsas in mente imprimit, vel certe ordinat* (see above, pp. 82, 83, and below, p. 253) *sine ullo discursu contemplantis; quin imo infundit quandoque species longe diversas ab eis quas ex phantasmatibus naturalibus acquirimus, ejusdem scilicet ordinis cum illis quibus intelligunt angeli vel animae separatae.* In support he cites Meynard, O.P., and his numerous authorities (*De virtutibus infusis*, pp. 185, 186, ed. 1901).

[2] *Homo in quantum contemplativus, est aliquid supra hominem, quia in intellectus simplici visione continuatur homo superioribus substantiis qui angeli dicuntur* (St Thomas, *In III*, d. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2, sol. 3).

Insisting on this main point of *infused newness* in knowledge, since he sees in it the very essence of mystical contemplation, in the strict sense, Benedict XIV draws attention to the fact that its proximate *cause* is the direct union of the mind of the contemplative with the divine Mind, or the taking possession of the soul by *God, who shows himself thereto in a very special way*, in a dazzling secret light, *in caligine*, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, enlightening the intelligence in order to make himself known in a more sublime manner and inflaming the heart to make himself loved more ardently.[1]

Benedict XIV adds a fourth difference, drawn from the *frequency* of the ecstasies; but as this is an accidental sign we prefer to keep to the first three: (1) Infused contemplation is a free gift reserved ordinarily, in spite of many exceptions, for the most perfect. (2) It requires no effort on our part, being a wholly passive state: our consent is all that is needed. (3) It is brought about through a *spiritual sensation*, far higher than the normal or abstractive processes of reason and faith, and therefore through infused species, which always more or less inform, in the angelic mode; for there is no sensation without *touch* or *impressed species*.

Starting from these three tests, Benedict XIV drew three corollaries of the highest importance.

I. Seeing that infused contemplation is only given to the most perfect as a general rule, subject to numerous exceptions, it is not an incontestable proof of sanctity, which must always be proved by the heroic degree of virtue: and this canonical rule has been definitely consecrated by the practice of the Church. It is possible to be a saint without being contemplative, and contemplation is not even mentioned in a great number of processes for canonization.[2]

II. The second corollary flows from the essential *passivity* of infused contemplation. Although it be a gift for personal

[1] *Causa proxima unionis est influxus Dei in animam contemplantem, qua* se illi ostendit speciali modo *in caligine per dona Spiritus sancti, illuminans intellectum ad se sublimiori modo cognoscendum, et inflammans voluntatem ad se ardentiori modo amandum . . .* (*ibid.*, no. 6). St Thomas had said the same: *In hac etiam vita . . Deus* quodammodo videri potest (I-II, q. lxix, a. 2, ad 3).

[2] *Complures perfectos experimur canonizari licet in processibus pro eis factis, de infusa contemplatione non fiat mentio, sed de aliis virtutibus in gradu heroïco . . . quia scimus plerosque beatorum et sanctorum catalogo fuisse adscriptos, qui nullatenus fuerunt contemplativi* (*ibid.*, xxvi, no. 8).

sanctification and not only for the edification of the Church, its entirely passive and wholly gratuitous mode prevents it from being meritorious *in itself*, although it may be the occasion of the greatest merits. Therefore, not one of those who has received it may conclude that he has greater merit and is more holy. No one should be proud if he has received it, any more than he should complain or be sad if he has not.[1]

III. Finally, a third corollary, drawn from the informing of the human mind by the very light of God (through infused species), and no longer through abstract concepts of reason or faith, as in ordinary or acquired contemplation, enables us to perceive the intimate character of this ineffable union between the infinite Mind and the mind of his poor creature; it is so great that it is impossible to conceive of a greater in this life. *Tertio notandum est*, says Benedict XIV . . . *per contemplationem perfecti contemplativi acquirunt unionem cum Deo ita perfectam ut in hac vita perfectior dari non potest* (*ibid.*, no. 6). And to celebrate it he borrows from the lyricism of St Gregory of Nazianzus images and comparisons equally precious to St Teresa and all the great mystics,[2] the exaggeration of which would be overdone without the transcendent elements just described.

Such is the teaching concerning contemplation common to theologians, according to Benedict XIV; we shall now see how the new school has endeavoured to go against it, under the pretext of a return to true tradition.

Let us begin with the fundamental question as to the *two species* of contemplation.

[1] *Theologi docent infusam contemplationem interdum concedi perfectis, interdum non perfectis, conceditur enim aliquando incipientibus et proficientibus qui utique perfecti non sunt, unde ait S. Gregorius* (l. II, Homil. 5 in Ezech., n. 19, col. 1361, vol. i): *Non enim contemplationis gratia summis datur et minimis non datur, sed saepe hanc summi, saepe minimi, saepe remoti, aliquando etiam conjugati percipiunt . . Et paulo post · Nemo ex hac gratia quasi de singularitate glorietur, nullus se donum veri luminis existimet habere privatum quia in eo quod se habere praecipuum putat, saepe alter est ditior, quem habere apud se boni aliquid non putabat* (*ibid.*, no. 7).

[2] *Quomodo ferrum ignitum et candens igni simillimum fit pristina propriaque forma exutum et quomodo solis luce perfusus aer in eamdem transformatur luminis claritatem, adeo ut non jam illuminatus, sed lumen ipsum esse videatur; sic omnem tunc* (*id est eo tempore quo anima Deo est intime unita*) *in sanctis humanam affectionem quodam ineffabili modo necesse erit a se ipsa liquescere, atque in Dei penitus transfundi voluntatem* (*ibid.*, no. 6).

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT AMBIGUITY: CONFUSION BETWEEN ACQUIRED AND INFUSED CONTEMPLATION

IN order to avoid ambiguity and confusion in the interpretation of the texts of our great mystics, the first thing is to possess the key to their terminology and to the psychological data of which it is the expression.

Now, whilst all the psychologies of Christian philosophers distinguish in the human soul, one and indivisible, three ascending spheres, corresponding to the *vegetative*, *animal*, and *rational* life, the psychology of the mystics suppresses or neglects the first, the vegetative, because it has no part in the life either of relation or of union, and it adds above the others a new, transcendental zone which must be explained.

The lowest sphere is called the *soul*, and comprises all the inferior powers of animal life: internal and external sensations, appetite and passions.

The middle is called the *spirit*, which is understood as applying to the reasoning faculties—namely, the intelligence, drawing ideas by abstraction from sensible data; the judgement and reasoning, combining these abstract concepts; finally, the will and love directed towards these same abstract data of reason or faith.

The highest sphere is called the *apex of the spirit*, or *centre*, *substance* or *base* of the soul, according to the analogy or metaphorical point of view chosen.

The word *apex* conveys the idea of pure spirit, which no longer draws its knowledge by abstraction from the objects of sense, and therefore receives them passively, by infusion, instead of producing them laboriously according to the human mode in this life. Here there is no longer need of labour to abstract and link together this superhuman knowledge by means of judgement and reasoning: the intelligence sees and understands all of which it is capable by seeing it: it is the pure intelligence that is a prelude to life separated from the body.

The word *base* of the soul signifies rather the profoundness of the secret of this new life which is a foreshadowing of eternal life, in which the spirit will be more completely freed from its bodily prison.

Finally, the word *centre* of the soul implies that all our powers flow from it as from their source, and that they converge and aspire to the return to the higher principle which is their end.

Now, what is remarkable is that all the mystical schools, without exception, locate the sensation of the divine, *πάθων θεία*, and the mystical union, in this *centre* of the soul or this *apex* of the spirit: the school of Dionysius the Areopagite as much as the German school of Tauler and Eckhart, the Spanish school of St Teresa and St John of the Cross, or the Italian school of St Catherine of Genoa. And this similarity of language demonstrates the uniformity of mystical experiences in every country and at every period, ending in one and the same teaching of higher psychology known as *mystical trichotomy*.[1]

These new horizons will already foreshow to the reader that for the purified soul there may be a progressive loosing from the ties of the body and a beginning of that life of pure spirits whereof we shall speak later (ch. vi).

But if in the contemplative there be found a knowledge in the *centre* of the soul or in the *apex* of the spirit which has not passed by way of the senses and the imagination, *whence does it come?*

This is a primary question, which the human mind has only been able to answer by two opposite solutions, for their origin must be either natural or supernatural.

The first hypothesis is that of the Ontologists and of the Platonists, with whom Fénelon became ranked when he wrote: "All this great mystery vanishes when we suppose with St Augustine that we have (naturally and without miracle) ideas which have not passed through the senses" (*Maximes des Saints*, pp. 200-202).

The second solution, unanimously accepted by the Thomist school and all Christian philosophers, especially since the repeated condemnations of Ontologism and Naturalism, admits supernatural lights or impressed species divinely *infused* into the soul of the contemplative.

[1] This theory is developed at length by Blosius, *Spiritual Instruction, passim;* or by Tauler, vol iv of his complete works, Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, p. 190; vol. viii, pp. 313, 315, etc.; or by St Catherine of Genoa, *Dialogues*, and so on. *Cf.* Bossuet's *Elévations*, *La Cène*, 93rd day, § 7; St John of the Cross, *Living Flame*, str. i, v. 3.—St Thomas calls this *apex* of the spirit *scintilla* or else *vertex* (*In II*, dist. xxxix, q. 3, a. 1, c.; *De Verit.*, q. xvi, a. 2, ad 3). *Cf.* St Teresa, quoted in *Mystical Phenomena*, pp. 77, 180, 181, etc.

But in thus placing contemplation by infused species in this transcendental region of the soul, above all the normal processes of human knowledge in this life, ample room is left, but below, in the second zone, for contemplation *acquired* by the ordinary processes of the mind.

It is therefore in this second sphere that the latter holds sway, otherwise we should have to say that it is impossible for the human mind, working normally, to become united with God through abstraction from images, even though sustained by the highest graces and the choicest gifts of the Holy Ghost. This obviously false conclusion brings out in relief the traditional distinction between *infused* and passive or extraordinary contemplation, operating in the apex of the spirit, and ordinary or *acquired* contemplation produced by the normal exercises of Christian asceticism.

It is not that there are two kinds of Christian perfection or union, but *two ways* of attaining to it. In the ordinary ways *we walk on foot*, actively and laboriously, in spite of all the help derived from the common graces and from the gifts of the Holy Ghost; in the extraordinary way, we are raised passively above the human mode, *driven in a carriage*, and we have merely not to resist: it is the " short cut " of which St Teresa speaks; it is the rain from heaven watering the garden without effort, in accordance with her famous apologue of the water-wheel. But the " short cut " does not do away with the high road.

In spite of the obviousness of so simple a conclusion, and in spite of the authority of Benedict XIV, who made it the basis of his teaching, as we have explained above (Chapter III), some writers of the new school insist on denying this essential distinction between the two contemplations. Quite recently M. Saudreau has maintained this denial in an article in the *Vie spirituelle* (March, 1921, p. 460), for which the publishers of that review, in a qualifying note at the time, refused to accept responsibility, in spite of the modifications with which the author thought it prudent to disguise his older and still more radical thesis.

From this false starting-point there spring the gravest errors which run the risk of mangling and misrepresenting the whole of mysticism. Therefore, for our part, we insist on it all the more.

The great argument used by our opponents is that the expressions *acquired* and *infused* contemplation are a recent

invention which appeared in the seventeenth century, and that we must return to the purer dogma that was changed about this time.

Doubtless, we answer, these two words, which give expression to an earlier and more or less implicit idea, may date from this time. But, as a master of theology has remarked, there are many theological expressions now consecrated by custom and even by faith, such as *transubstantiation*, *consubstantial*, *opus operatum*, and many others introduced in the course of ages[1] to explain doctrines already taught implicitly by tradition.

" In fact," writes the same author, " for more than two centuries, all the great schools of mystical theology admit, under divers names, the distinction between acquired and infused contemplation. Such, for instance, as the Benedictines, with Fr. Schram and Dom Lehodey; the Dominicans, represented by Thomas a Vallgornera, Massoulié, and Meynard; the Franciscans, of whom Brancati de Laurea may be looked upon as the interpreter; the Carmelites, with Philip of the Trinity, Honorius of St Mary, and Fr. Marie-Joseph; the Jesuit Fathers, such as Alvarez de Paz, Scaramelli, Poulain; the Redemptorists, of whom St Alphonsus Liguori is the recognized representative, and yet others. Is it possible that all these religious, who had no other ambition than to reproduce and throw light on the traditional teaching of their respective orders, and of whom many were themselves contemplatives, were deceived and had changed the teaching derived from the best sources ? We do not think so, and it seems to us that the distinction between these two kinds of contemplation takes greater account of the traditional teaching."[2]

To the support of so authoritative an assertion, let us invoke the testimony of Dionysius the Carthusian, the " Ecstatic Doctor " (1394-1471), who sums up the whole of the middle ages and whom theologians look upon as the most sure guide in the mystical ways. In his treatise *De fonte lucis et semitis vitae*, Art. XIV, he formally distinguishes two kinds of contemplation: that which, with the aid of grace, may be

[1] In the fourth century the word *consubstantial*, *homoousios*, made its appearance in the Creed; the word *filioque* about the fifth; and in theology the expression *physical predetermination* in the sixteenth; that of *sufficing grace* in the seventeenth, with Jansenism, and so on. As St Augustine says, words matter but little provided that the thing is understood: *Cum res ipsa intelligatur, minus laborandum est quid eam hominibus vocare placuerit* (*Contra Crescon.*, bk. i, ch. xiii).

[2] Tanquerey, *La Vie spirituelle*, December, 1920, p. 173.

acquired by our own effort, and that which is *infused* and to which only those attain who are called to it.[1]

Nevertheless, Dionysius the Carthusian was not the first to formulate so solemn a teaching. Three centuries before, we find the same distinction expressed perhaps with even more complete precision by Richard of St Victor, who died in 1173. This great mystic enumerates three kinds of contemplation: one active, one passive, and the third mixed. For it may be produced, he remarks, in three ways: (1) By the simple labour of man, who directs all his faculties towards it (this is philosophical contemplation); (2) by the operation of God alone, " who does all," as St Teresa says, and who consequently infuses new ideas or species (this is infused contemplation); (3) finally, by a blending of the two actions, divine and human (this is acquired or mixed contemplation).

Primus modus contemplationis, he says, *surgit ex industria humana ; tertius ex* sola *gratia divina ; medius autem ex utriusque permixtione, humanae scilicet industriae et gratiae divinae.*[2]

We have quoted an analogous text from St Thomas (*Mystical Phenomena*, p. 52); as to those of St Teresa, they are numberless, as we have seen. The distinction between the *two ways, active and passive*, is perhaps the teaching on which she has insisted the most, and which Benedict XIV has most accentuated. Thus it is shown to be the fundamental teaching of every age; how unwise, therefore, is it to claim that the faith on this point was changed in the seventeenth century.

[1] Here is the text: *Quod* duobus modis *ad mysticae theologiae visionem ecstaticumque amorem . . . anima perducatur. Itaque ad hanc*, uno modo *pertingit homo, se ipsum excitando ac disponendo. . . .* Alio modo . . . *absque suo conamine, ac praeparatione praedicta, dum se misericordissime desuper praevenitur, atque divinitus fortiter illustratur* (*De fonte lucis*, a. 14, vol. 41, p. 112). The same distinction is often repeated: *Mens humana ad simplicis veritatis intuitum quodam processu ac discursu ex multis, proficiscitur ac pertingit. Sed hoc locum habet in contemplationibus ad quos ab inferiori per rationis inquisitionem ac studium pervenitur* (acquired); *non autem in contemplationibus sublimioribus* (infused) *quae Spiritu Sancto desuper radiante coelitus infunduntur, Deo mentem supernaturaliter tangente, ungente ac illustrante. Nempe in talibus, habet se mens humana, angelico modo . . .* (*De contempl.*, bk. i, a. 12, p. 146; *cf.* bk. iii, a. 2, p. 256). In order to acquire the first kind of contemplation, Dionysius gives some curious instructions, some even physical: *Sunt quaedam industriae ad hoc non modicum conferentes* (*ibid.*, pp. 129, 162, etc.).

[2] *Benjamin Minor*, bk. v, c. 1, *P. L.* cxcvi, col. 170. The same idea is found in St Bernard, quoted by Dionysius the Carthusian, *De fonte lucis*, art. 14, p. 112.

To deny, then, this fundamental distinction, to confuse passive or infused contemplation with that which is active or acquired, and to call them by the same name, appears to us a most serious distortion of mystical theology, serious in itself and no less serious in its practical results.

First of all, *in itself*, the theology which tends to confuse the two contemplations, and to reduce them to one very simple mode accessible to all pious souls, must consequently tend to eliminate from them all extraordinary and transcendental elements which would obviously render it unattainable by human effort, aided by ordinary grace.

It must therefore deny, with M. Saudreau, the intervention of *divine touches* or *impressed species infused* by God after the manner of the angels,[1] in the place of concepts abstracted from sensible data; and must explain all by the operation of these abstract concepts enlightened by a more lively faith and enkindled by a more ardent love. Such was also the claim of the quietist Ontologists of the seventeenth century and of Fénelon, already cited (p. 134): "All this great mystery fades away when it is granted, with St Augustine, that we have without any miracle (or naturally) intellectual ideas that have not come through the senses. . . . All passive contemplation is then reduced to something very simple, with nothing miraculous about it. It is a tissue of acts of faith and love . . . so simple that they seem to be no more than one single act . . . no act . . . a repose" (*Maximes des Saints*, pp. 200-202).

Consequently it must deny the intuitive *sensation* of the divine which normally results from these infused impressed species, as we shall explain later (Chapter IX). It must then deny the five spiritual senses of the divine so renowned in mysticism (Chapter X), making of them merely metaphors without reality.

It must, furthermore, reject, as outside the normal ways of mysticism, the three last Mansions of St Teresa (full union, ecstatic union, and spiritual marriage), which constitute precisely the most characteristic, the most beautiful, and the most delightful part of it. And the fourth Mansion (quiet) will possess only what it has in common with the higher degrees of the prayer of simplicity in acquired contemplation.

In a word, the new mysticism will end almost at the point where ours and that of Benedict XIV and St Teresa begins: at

[1] We do not say species always *purely* spiritual like those of the angels; their infused source is enough for the comparison.

the first appearance of impressed infused species; at the sensation of the divine which is the result of them; at the awakening of the five spiritual senses, beginning by the more obscure, touch and taste.

It will be then but a curtailed mysticism, or even less than that, a mere preparation for true mysticism, a *pre-mysticism*, a high degree of the prayer of simplicity.[1]

From the practical point of view, mysticism thus "simplified" will be within the reach of every pious soul, and it is thus possible to maintain that "all directors *may* and *ought* to force these souls into the passive ways and quiet, just as they are now exhorted to frequent and even daily communion!" A strange paradox, which confuses the ascetic ways within the reach of man, such as the reception of the sacraments, with the extraordinary or passive ways, which are not only beyond the reach of human effort, but out of all proportion to our merits, being purely gratuitous, as the Teresian Congress has affirmed (see Appendix VI).

Now, experience has only too often shown that this leaning towards passiveness—when it is the artifice of man and not imposed by God and his gift—not only tends to enervate and make souls weak, but runs the risk of making them illuminati, visionaries, and false mystics, to the discredit of true mysticism.

As witness of this may be cited the case of Loublande, for which the teachers of the new school had so great a responsibility; the case of Sister Gertrude Mary, whose *Life* was condemned by the Holy Office, in spite of the warm approbations of the same school; and so many other cases known to us, of which the scandal has been hushed up without the excitement calming down!

It is impossible to put up too strong a defence, for ourselves and for souls, against this new invasion of semi-quietism which threatens us as it did in the seventeenth century. We must remember that spiritual "mimicry" is contagious (see Part II, ch. i, § 8) and may become epidemic, especially at an anxious period such as that troubling the post-war world to-day.

[1] On the contrary, by maintaining all these transcendental elements in the normal sphere of the mystical ways—as does Fr. Arintero—we make its extraordinary character only the more apparent and the unlikelihood of its being accessible to every soul is emphasized on every side.

CHAPTER V

IS KNOWLEDGE IN INFUSED CONTEMPLATION DIFFERENT IN DEGREE OR IN KIND?

WE should again lapse into the confusion between infused and acquired contemplation if we were to admit only a difference of intensity or degree between them and not one of nature. The new problem, then, is a main point: all that follows may even be said to depend on it. It is necessary to see whether infused contemplation introduces a new and extraordinary element or not. And as, according to St Thomas, knowledge is the first and fundamental element in contemplation, before that of love, let us begin with it and thus take the bull by the horns.

The teaching of Benedict XIV on this point, as we have seen, is formal. "Whilst in acquired contemplation," he has told us, "we know no other objects than those that are already known to us by faith, in infused contemplation God reveals to us new objects through the infusion of new species, *novas eorum species infundendo*, or else shows us the objects already known with new details and additions." New species—either wholly or partially new[1]—are then always infused. Such was the common teaching of theologians, at least in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, according to both Cardinal de Laurea and Benedict XIV. But whence did these theologians themselves derive it? Doubtless from St Thomas and his school, as we shall see in the following chapter; but also from the new writings of the great mystics whose names resounded everywhere at that time, notably St Teresa and St John of the Cross.

Here is the teaching of the latter—who speaks to us with the double authority of theologian and of mystic canonized by the Church—on the essential difference between the two kinds of knowledge.

Infused contemplation, he says, is distinguished from the

[1] St Thomas admits the infusion of species *partially* new or complementary to species already normally acquired: (*Dico*) *formas tunc acceptas ex influxu superioris substantiae, esse formales et completivas respectu formarum acquisitarum a sensibus* (*In IV*, dist. 50, a. 2, ad 4).

other *as is the light of day from artificial light*.[1] " *So clear* is [the spiritual light] *of all intelligible forms* [abstract species] that the understanding is not conscious of its presence "; " it *withdraws the understanding from its accustomed lights* "[2] ; and " as all the natural operations of the soul, which are within its control, depend on the senses only, it follows that God is now working in a special manner *in this state*."[3] " [This] mystical theology," he repeats elsewhere, "according to St Thomas, is infused into the soul more especially by love. This happens in a secret hidden way in which the natural operations of the understanding and the other faculties have no share. And therefore . . . the faculties of the soul cannot compass it . . . it enters not into the understanding under any form or image subject to sense."[4] Thus there is no longer any mediation of the senses, no longer abstract ideas drawn from sensible images, but species infused by God.

It is objected that intellectual *visions* are very rare, which we admit. It is so of intellectual visions of our Lord or of the holy angels. But here it is not a question of visions or particular and distinct revelations, which are *accidental* to the mystical life and separable from contemplation. We are concerned with the *essence* of infused contemplation—that is, of a general and confused form of revelation of the presence of God in our consciences, susceptible of infinite degrees of light, from the obscurity of spiritual touch to more or less clear vision.

We need hardly say that in *imperfect* contemplation nothing prevents God from *raising* or *combining* intelligible species already produced by man's abstraction, without forming new ones. St John of the Cross notes this well. As regards certain tastes of God, he says, it is another matter; ordinarily these favours are manifested under sensible forms which allow of comparison. But *this possibility does not exist in the state of pure contemplation*, which defies all description (*Night*, ii, 23; *Spiritual Canticle*, str. 14, 15).

This imperfect contemplation is, as it were, a first dawn, a beginning of contemplation, and in it we have the *bridge* which connects asceticism with mysticism (cf. *Mystical Phenomena*, p. 83).

St Teresa, before St John of the Cross, had stated the same teaching, although she was not a theologian and was content

[1] *Ascent*, ii, 15.
[2] *Ibid.*, 14.
[3] *Living Flame*, str. iii, v. 3.
[4] *Dark Night*, bk. ii, ch. xvii.

to describe without putting forward theological speculations. Like him she admits a difference of order or nature, and not only one of degree, between the two contemplations.

It should be enough to have read but once, without prejudice, the descriptions of the last four Mansions of the Castle of the Soul (spiritual marriage, ecstatic union, simple union, and even quiet) to be at once convinced that these four mystical states are not at all *in the same line* with the lower states of prayer of the spiritual life. They belong, on the contrary, to a separate order. This is so obvious that M. Saudreau has attempted to place all of them (except quiet) outside the normal ways of the mystical life! An amputation which Fr. Arintero treats very severely, and rightly declares to be "quite inadmissible."[1] The knowledge in them, therefore, belongs to a separate order. Let us hear how St Teresa herself explains it:

"In mystical theology—of which I spoke before—the understanding ceases from its acts [after the ordinary method], because God suspends it—as I shall explain by and by. . . . We must neither imagine nor think that we can of ourselves bring about this suspension [a warning to Quietists !]. . . . For when our Lord suspends the understanding, and makes it cease from its acts, he puts before it that which astonishes and occupies it [other species]; so that, without making any reflections, it shall comprehend in the space of a *Credo* more than we could comprehend in many years with all the efforts in the world."[2]

There are thus two elements: the one *negative*, obtained by the suspension of mental effort, of reasoning, of abstract concepts, and of normal forms of sensibility, whence the concepts are abstracted;[3] the other *positive*, that is the reception of infused species taking the place of those abstracted: the void is at once filled and filled wondrously.

As to the *mode* of this intellectual operation, the Saint does not cease to repeat that it is the immediate *union* of the soul to God, spirit to spirit, at times by a *contact* more or less obscure and confused (*divine darkness*), at other times, more rarely, by a more or less clear *sight* of his presence, according to the degrees

[1] *Cuestiones misticas*, 2nd edition, p. 51.

[2] *Life*, ch. xii.

[3] St Thomas says the same: "For contemplation two obstacles must be eliminated, *quod duplex differmitas amoveatur*—that is to say, *images* of outward things and *reasoning*" (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 6, ad 2)—contrary to the normal condition of human understanding.

of contemplation. This is what she calls a "*presence of God felt*," an "expansion of the intelligence," a "ray which pierces the night," a "transparent faith," a union "of essence with essence," solely with the "divinity," a "fusion" with the infinite Spirit, who makes *one only* with the soul, according to those words of St Paul which she loves to repeat: *qui adhaeret Deo, unus spiritus est* (1 Cor. v 17).

Now it is clear to all unbiassed minds that there is no longer question here of the *ordinary* action of grace and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Neither the *negative* element nor the *positive* element which St Teresa has just described is to be discovered, even in a feeble degree, in the ordinary prayer of the Christian. The point at issue here, then, is an extraordinary mode of contemplation, *supernatural* both as regards the *substance* and the *mode*, as theologians say: *quoad substantiam et quoad modum*. The contemplatives who have experienced it—and they are its best judges—realize so well the radical difference between the two modes of knowledge that when they are raised to infused contemplation, it seems to them that they enter into a wholly new world so different from the first that they are disconcerted by it and are left in a state of strange stupefaction. As all directors agree, this is a terrible trial for them. They feel themselves so powerless to express these infused lights in sensible images, in abstract concepts, in discoursing, in accordance with the ordinary human method, that they hesitate in distress, strive to make metaphors, contradict themselves, and excuse themselves for their inability to express the ineffable, like the prophet: *A, A, A, Domine, ecce nescio loqui* (Jer. i 6).

The new infused element in contemplative knowledge then becomes undeniably apparent here. As a venerable religious, well known for his solid works on mysticism, wrote to us, "in this we have a definite proof."

"It is impossible," says Fr. Maréchal in his turn, "to do away with or to weaken the clear line of demarcation which is unanimously traced by mystical writers, the only ones who have had experience, between ordinary contemplation—that is, even the highest acquired contemplation—and full union. It is impossible to deny that they experienced a radical difference, the absence of a common measure."[1]

And let no one object that in the text cited from St Teresa

[1] *De quelques traits . . .*, p. 465 of the *Revue de Philos.* or 52 of the separate supplement.

there is question of some supereminent degree of contemplation; on the contrary, it concerns the *commencements* of mystical favours and the first degree of quiet. Our Saint expressly states this.

" I used," she says, " to have at times, as I have said, though it used to pass quickly away, certain commencements of that which I am going now to describe. . . . A feeling of the presence of God would come over me unexpectedly, so that I could in no wise doubt either that he was within me, or that I was wholly absorbed in him. It was not by way of vision; I believe it was what is called mystical theology [conscious sensation of the divine] . . . the understanding, so I think, makes no reflections [through abstract concepts]—yet is not lost " (*Life*, ch. x).

The only case in which the understanding is not suspended is the *passive recollection* preparatory to quiet. Moreover, St Teresa refuses to call this mystical contemplation, but only the " vestibule " or " antechamber." The suspension of the understanding, then, which no longer acts after its human mode through species abstracted from sensible images, but by species divinely infused, such, according to St Teresa, is the criterion, the characteristic note, which, as she says, she was able to testify " when I attained to some degree of supernatural prayer—I speak of the prayer of quiet " (*Life*, ch. xxii). This testimony is clear and decisive: all the contrary *a priori* reasonings of speculative theologians are shattered by it.

St John of the Cross, dealing with this point, constantly re-echoes St Teresa. " The acts and exercises of the understanding, memory and will," says he, " at least discursively, have ceased [in mystical contemplation] . . . it brings with it peace and rest, sweetness and delight without trouble. . . . God now communicates himself to the soul, thus passive, *as the light of the sun to him whose eyes are open* " (*Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. xiii, xv). And these divine touches, he remarks a little further on, bring not only a new love but new knowledge: *toqui di noticia y sabor* (*ibid.*, xxiv), were it but the knowledge of the presence and of the action within us of the divine Agent. Elsewhere he sums up in these few remarkable words the very nature of pure contemplation: *Contemplation*, for the mind, is not to act but *to receive:* " *la contemplacion pura consiste en recibir* " (*Living Flame*, str. iii).

And to receive what ? It is to receive the " *touch of the understanding* " in which God " impresses (*species impressa*) a

pure knowledge without abstraction from image," and in the heart " *the touch of pure love*," as this mystical saint so often repeats.[1] The contemplative soul thus becomes wholly passive beneath the divine touch: it receives a knowledge and a love *ready made*, which becomes the immediate cause, by reaction, of consent and the vital act of contemplation.

The new school, on the contrary, claims that the mind receives no infused species; that it continues to produce its abstract concepts in a degree so much the greater as it is urged the more by the gifts of the Holy Ghost—the complete reverse of the Teresian teaching.

In the following chapter the same argument—so great is its importance—will be pursued on other lines. Is this new mode of knowledge through touch or infused species analogous with that of the angels ?

[1] " The receptive passion of the understanding can only receive knowledge purely and passively—and this only when it has been purified—therefore previous to purgation the soul feels less frequently the touch of knowledge than the passion of love, for this latter does not require that the soul should be so thoroughly purified concerning its passions " (*Night*, bk. ii, ch. xiii). " The light that is to be given to [the soul] is a certain divine light of the highest nature, surpassing all natural light, and not naturally cognizable by the understanding " (*ibid.*, ch. ix). It should be noted that the expression *divine touch* in the language of the mystics has two meanings: (1) a general sense which signifies the conscious and confused passivity of infused contemplation; (2) a sense proper to certain distinct forms of knowledge or revelations and to certain delicious tastes which are the accessory graces of contemplation (cf. *Ascent of Carmel*, bk. ii ,ch. xxxii).

CHAPTER VI

ANGELIC CONTEMPLATION

WITHOUT appearing to be so, this question is very important, since it has started a veritable schism in the ranks of the new school. In fact, we read in the *Cuestiones misticas* of Fr. Arintero (p. 51) the following words, in which we rejoice, for they are an act of freedom and of courage :

" That which appears to us as most unacceptable in the teaching of M. Saudreau may be summed up in the following points: (1) The fact of excluding, as he seems to exclude or does indeed exclude from the *ordinary mystical* state (to which he agrees that we are all called and may aspire as to a necessary term of our perfection), precisely that in it which is most estimable and notable, and which is able to establish us in the *perfect state*, which is what he calls by the somewhat new name of the *angelic state*, wherein he places, as though exceptional and rare, all the divine communications in which the imagination has no part, and which, from that very fact, do not conform to the customary mode in which man understands, but to that proper to the angels. . . ."

Fr. Arintero thus detaches himself from the Saudreau school in order to uphold his conviction that the angelic mode of knowledge, by infusion and without abstraction, is precisely what is most remarkable and important in true infused contemplation. This also is our own thesis, and that which St Thomas upheld with noteworthy insistence in the wake of Dionysius.

The contemplative life, says the angelic Doctor, belongs to the sphere of human intelligence to the extent in which it is more or less like that of the angels: *Actio contemplativae vitae ad intellectum pertinet secundum quem homo cum angelis convenit* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 6, obj. 2). And again: *Homo in quantum contemplativus, est aliquid supra hominem, quia in intellectus simplici visione continuatur homo superioribus substantiis quae angeli dicuntur* (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2, sol. 3).

Here is what the holy Doctor teaches with regard to Adam in the state of innocence and his contemplation of God and of

things divine—and we know that it is the same contemplation of Adam, reconquered by the merits of the Redeemer, which is enjoyed by our mystics.

" The first man," he says, " had two ways of knowing God: the one analogous to that of the angels, by an *interior inspiration* (infused contemplation); the other by the mirror of sensible creatures, as we all do in this present state."[1] Then he explains: " This interior inspiration was a reflection of the divine Wisdom . . . impressing a certain spiritual likeness on his intelligence (*infused impressed species*). And it is thus," he repeats, " that Adam became like to an Angel in the knowledge of contemplation, by a gift of grace (whilst with the Angel it was by a gift of nature)."[2]

Elsewhere the same holy Doctor says expressly that his (Adam's) intelligence knew God by the infusion of impressed species, which is proper to the angels: *per aliquas intelligibiles immissiones, quod est proprie Angelorum* (*De Verit.*, q. xiii, a. 2, ad 9).

In this same passage he adds a curious parallel between the mystical sleep of Adam and the rapture of St Paul. The first, he says, was the contemplation of God in impressed infused species after the manner of the angels and not in his essence; the second was the contemplation of God in his essence itself.[3]

It remains to make clear the nature of this direct knowledge of God which the angels had in their state of probation. St Thomas will once more help us. There are, he says, three kinds of knowledge of God: (1) In his essence; (2) by impressed infused species; (3) in the mirror of species abstracted from sensible creatures. Now, the angels do not naturally possess the

[1] *In [primo] homine duplex cognitio erat: una qua cognoscebat Deum conformiter Angelis per inspirationem internam; alia, qua cognoscebat Deum conformiter nobis per sensibiles creaturas* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 2, c.).

[2] *Cognoscebat Deum per inspirationem internam ex irradiatione divinae sapientiae, per quem modum Deum cognoscebat non ex visibilibus creaturis, sed ex quadam spirituali similitudine suae menti impressa . . Adam conformabatur Angelo in cognitione contemplationis, per gratiam* (*De Verit., ibid.*, ad 4).

[3] *Et hoc dupliciter: uno modo secundum quod intellectus intelligit Deum per aliquas intelligibiles immissiones, quod est proprie Angelorum; et sic fuit extasis Adae, ut dicitur Gen. II, in Glossa ordin. . . . quod extasis recte intelligitur ad hoc immissa, ut mens Adae particeps angelicae curiae, et intrans sanctuarium Dei, novissime intelligeret. Alio modo, secundum quod intellectus videt Deum per essentiam; et ad hoc fuit raptus Paulus* (*De Verit.*, q. xiii, a. 2, ad 9).

first; nor were they bound to the third, since they are without sensible organs. Their knowledge, then, was intermediate, *media est.*

It is not reflective like the third, nor intuitive in the sense of the beatific vision; and although it may approach more closely to the third than to the first, we must maintain that it is not reflective but direct, *to be likened to the immediate perception of the external senses through impressed species.* St Thomas formally teaches this: *media est inter duas et similatur illi cognitioni qua videtur res per speciem* (*impressam*) *ab ea acceptam* (I, q. lvi, a. 3). *Quasi species impressa rei visae* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1).

Now the vision by *impressed species* is precisely the type of the direct vision of man. St Thomas himself states this when he adds, in comparing the vision of the innocent Adam with that of the angels: "Like the angels, Adam saw God without mediation, *sine medio*, not that he saw him in his essence, but in his act imprinted in his intelligence by impressed infused species": *Dicitur* (*Adam*) *Deum* sine medio *vidisse, non quia per essentiam videret, sed . . . mediante effectu spirituali* (*species impressa*) *in intellectum ejus resultante, sicut angeli in primo statu* (*Deum*) *videbant* (*In II*, dist. 23, q. 2, a. 1).

This vision, then, does not attain to the essence of God, any more than in perception through the external senses we attain to the essence of bodies; it is enough to apprehend without reasoning their presence and their operation in us in order to admit their immediate perception. St Thomas is inflexible on this point: there is no *expressed* species nor ideal mirror in the perception of the senses, and the *impressed* species is not the *id quod* nor even the *id in quo percipimus*, otherwise we should fall once more into the Suarezian and Cartesian theories of intermediate images, which, in anticipation, he so energetically opposed.

It is objected that, the angels having been furnished with intelligible species from their creation (I, q. lvi, a. 2), these are but remembrances, innate ideas, or mirrors in which they know God indirectly. To speak thus is to forget that, preservation being a *continued creation*, according to the happy theory of St Thomas, the infusion of these impressed species goes on at every moment. In the divine action which unceasingly infuses them the angels are able to apprehend—as at the first moment—and unceasingly contemplate the presence of the divine Agent. Their knowledge of God is not reflective but direct. And the more so as regards Adam, who, as our opponents admit, never possessed innate ideas of God.

This does not mean that we fully liken the knowledge of the mystics to that of the angels. There is analogy between them in the mode, through species which God infuses into them directly, but there is no identity. In fact, the angelic species are always by nature purely spiritual, and naturally unintelligible to man, *sunt supra mentem hominis*. Those of the contemplatives are often identical with the species that come through the senses; and when they are spiritual and *supra mentem*, in the highest degrees of contemplation,[1] they may have, in man, an *echo* in the organs of sense. Not only is the heart of flesh moved and thrilled, according to the Psalmist, *cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum* (Ps. lxxxiii 3), but the intelligence also seeks sensible images in order to translate into abstract concepts and to express the ineffable in human language.[2]

Here are *consequences* which the angels do not experience. The knowledge in the sublime and passing act of contemplation remains none the less similar to that of the angels in both *origin* and *cause*, though not in all its effects. This is enough to call it in a manner angelic and to state, with St Thomas, that all contemplatives walk *in the wake of the angels: homo in quantum est contemplativus est aliquid supra hominem quia in visione simplici intellectus* (without abstraction) *continuatur homo superioribus substantiis quae intelligentiae vel angeli dicuntur* (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2).

Fr. de Maumigny was then able to write: " Imperfect contemplation is a beginning of angelic language; perfect contemplation goes much further and makes us rival the angels." This is the literal translation of St Thomas's expression, *sicut alter Angelus*,[3] and M. Saudreau ought not to be scandalized thereat.[4] On the other hand, by denying this resemblance

[1] *Fit extasis . . . cum aliquis etiam actu ab usu sensuum . . . abstrahitur, ad aliqua supernaturaliter videnda. Videtur autem supernaturaliter praeter sensum, et intellectum, et* imaginationes. . . . *Uno modo secundum quod intellectus intelligit Deum* per aliquas *intelligibiles immissiones* [species impressas], quod est proprie Angelorum; et sic fuit extasis Adae (*De Verit.*, q. xiii, a. 2, ad 9). *Cf.* Dionysius the Carthusian, *In com. de mystica theol.*, a. 8; Card. Bona, *Via compendii ad Deum*, ch. x, n. 1.

[2] *Cf.* St Thomas, I-II, q. xxiv, a. 3, ad 1; II-II, q. lxxxii, a. 4; III, q. lxxix, a. 1, ad 2.

[3] *Adam autem in statu innocentiae per gratiam habuit illum modum visionis quam habet angelus per naturam, ut dictum est; et ideo dicitur sicut alter angelus* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 12).

[4] Saudreau, *Les faits extraordinaires*, p. 175.

between contemplatives and the holy angels, so clearly taught by St Thomas, he abases infused contemplation, and confounds it with that which is acquired.

M. Saudreau again objects that if the angels see God (in the sense explained) the devils see him also. But there is a simple answer to this. The devils have not lost their angelic nature, nor this radical power, if God thinks well to continue to show himself to them.[1] In this case the vision of him—in no way loving but filled with hatred—would become their torture. It is in this sense that Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange has rightly stated (*La Vie spirit.*, March, 1920, p. 369), with Fr. Rousselot, that the devils *see the supernatural in a distorted way* and the opposite from us. The word *to believe* has not the same meaning for them as it has for us: *Credere aequivoce dicitur de hominibus fidelibus et daemonibus ; nec est in eis fides ex aliquo lumine gratiae infuso, sicut est in fidelibus* (*De Verit.*, q. xiv, a. 9, ad 4). The devils perceive the *lovable* as the *hateful*, but they do perceive it, only their perception is reversed.

The angelic mode of knowing God, then, is not to be excluded from infused or extraordinary contemplation, since it is its foundation — in different degrees — as we have just seen, according to St Thomas, St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and Benedict XIV, who summed up their teaching.

This mode is superhuman, but it admits of every possible degree of light: from the obscure revelation of the sole presence of God in our souls to that of his highest mysteries. It is thus also with the angels, whose illumination varies with their hierarchy, their capacity, and the designs of God.

We conclude that what distinguishes the mystic or passive from the ordinary ways, from the psychological standpoint, is the privilege granted to the purified soul of detaching itself gradually from the fetters of the body, so that it may come to act after the manner of pure spirits.[2]

[1] *Omnes Angeli, boni et mali, intime contemplantur* (*Deum*), *quia scientiam* (*Dei*) *a sensu non accipiunt* (*In II*, dist. x, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2). *Daemones dicuntur inter* assistentes (*Dei*) *in quantum cum eis* (*bonis*) *conveniunt in primo modo intimae contemplationis* (*ibid.*).

[2] We find the same view set forth by Dom Mayer, O.S.B.: " In the soul's manner of action, there is a difference of species which permits of a definition of the essence of the mystical life: in the ordinary interior life the soul acts in union with the body; in the mystical life, it comes by degrees to act in the manner of a pure spirit. . . While remarking this difference, modern theologians,

A *first objection* against angelic knowledge in mystical contemplation was brought forward in the *Vie spirituelle* of February, 1922, p. 393. " It would follow," we read there, " that mystical contemplation would be of an immeasurably lower order than that of sanctifying grace and of the theological virtues. It would not be a participation in the divine nature and life, but only in the angelic life: there is a great gulf between the two. . . . Is not this, whilst appearing greatly to raise mystical contemplation, in effect to lower it considerably ?" We hasten to reassure the writer: according to us the infusion of impressed species in no way *excludes* participation either in the divine nature through sanctifying grace or in the divine life through the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Such an enormity is far from our minds and is quite wrongly ascribed to us. We only say that the contemplative participates in the divine life through a quasi-angelic process. The angels themselves, raised to the supernatural order, participate in it in this way. Far from being mutually exclusive, these two facts wonderfully unite. Furthermore, this writer finds himself obliged (p. 394) to admit impressed species at least in the higher states of contemplation, which, moreover, he calls " *supereminent.*"[1] Thus it is not to " lower it considerably," which goes to prove that contemplation is only a *means* and not an *end;* a means (among several others) of sharing in the divine life and sanctity, not that divine life and sanctity themselves. Now this is the continual confusion of our adversaries.

Second objection.—We read on p. 395: " To wish to explain this superhuman mode (of contemplation) *not by* the infused light of the gift of wisdom, but by infused species as with the angels . . . is to *materialize* the doctrine of St Thomas. . . ." Here again an exclusion is wrongly ascribed to us. We maintain with St Thomas that *two means* are required equally for contemplation: the *lumen* of the gifts, uplifting the faculty to judge better of what is seen, and moreover, as regards the object, the *species*, revealing something new. We have quoted above the formal texts of the holy Doctor: *indigebat*

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such as John of St Thomas, are not opposed to the old mystics, but define more exactly the psychological aspect of the mystical life, which the latter considered much less than its theological aspect " (*Pastor Bonus*, Treves, 1920–1921, pp. 143-149, German review *Theologie und Glaube*).

[1] Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection chr. et contemplation*, p. 384, Append., pp. 57, 92.

(Adam) *duplici medio . . . similitudo Dei et lumen. . . .*[1] Now, to suppress the first of these means, the *species*, and to retain only the second, the *lumen*, as this writer does, is not to *materialize* the doctrine of St Thomas, but, on the contrary, to *idealize* it, which is no better. Both, then, must be retained; the form and the matter, the light which enlightens and the new object enlightened; nor must such liberties be taken with the most formal texts of St Thomas because they are troublesome.

The *third objection* flows from the last two, and is no better. It would seem that by attributing to infused contemplation an angelic and therefore supernatural mode, that grace known as *gratum Deo faciens* (or for the benefit of the soul or body of him who receives it) would be changed into grace *gratis data* (or for the benefit of others). But this is not a necessary conclusion. With St Thomas we distinguish two kinds of grace *gratum faciens :* the one is of the ordinary order and the other preternatural. As an example of the latter the holy Doctor cites, for the benefit of the body, *impassibility*, which is evidently of the preternatural order.[2] In the same way, for the benefit of the soul, the angelic mode of contemplation by infused species is both *gratum faciens* and preternatural. Whether he will or no, the writer is faced with this extraordinary element in infused contemplation, which he rejects at any price, in order, contrary to all likelihood, to sustain the theory that this contemplation is accessible to all.

This first flaw in M. Saudreau's theory carries with it another which entirely destroys it and completes the breach with Fr. Arintero.

[1] *Indigebat* (*Adam*) duplici medio, *scilicet medio quod est similitudo Dei* (species impressa), *et quod est elevans vel dirigens mentem* (lumen) (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, c.). *Indigebat* (*Adam*) *medio quod est quasi* species *rei visae ; quia per aliquod spirituale* lumen *menti hominis influxum divinitus, quod erat quasi similitudo expressa lucis increatae, Deum videbat* (*ibid.*). Ordinary contemplation, having nothing new to discover, is content with the *lumen* of the gifts, to admire and enter more deeply into that which it already knows by reason or faith. Extraordinary contemplation alone has need to apply the *lumen* to infused *species* in order to discover something new and not to operate in the void. To deny the infused species is then, once again, to deny the two orders of contemplation.

[2] *Gratia gratum faciens . . . qua perficitur vel secundum animam vel secundum corpus, sicut . . . impassibilitas corporis* (*In II*, dist. xxix, q. 1, a. 3, c.)

"The second point which we find unsatisfactory in the teaching of M. Saudreau," writes the learned Spanish Dominican, ". . . is the way he constantly lowers in importance, and rejects, *spiritual senses* . . . going so far at times as to exclude this marvellous and undeniable *supernatural perception* of God as though it were incompatible with the state of *viatores*" (*ibid.*, p. 56).

This will be our next subject.

CHAPTER VII

IS THE "INTERMEDIATE" PERCEPTION OF GOD AN "INVENTION" OF FR. POULAIN?

BETWEEN the vision of God in his essence, like that of the blessed in heaven, and his contemplation in the mirror of concepts of reason and faith, we admit, with St Thomas (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1), that there is an intermediate contemplation—*media est*, he says—which operates, as we shall explain later, thanks to a direct action of God on our consciousness, and in which we apprehend, immediately and without reasoning, not indeed the nature but the presence within us of the divine Agent, made manifest in his action itself. Thus it is, for example, that our consciousness apprehends, not the nature, but the existence of our thinking *ego*, through the very action of thought, directly and without any reasoning.

This is our thesis, freed from all the misunderstandings and all the travesties with which it has been disfigured.

Now M. Saudreau, having, in the *Vie spirituelle* (March, 1921, p. 164, note), levelled against the late Fr. Poulain the grave accusation of having invented this theory, drew the following reply in the same review (June, p. 234):

". . . There is an embarrassment of choice in my answers. I limit myself *for the moment* to an argument from authority, and I choose this authority from among those that he himself cites.

"This authority is the celebrated Fr. Arintero, O.P., who, at the University of Salamanca, expressly teaches the *two* following Thomist *theses*, which are also my own. I take them from the *Cuestiones misticas*, 1920 edition, pp. 58 and 62, and I translate literally for the benefit of those of your readers not familiar with the Spanish language.

1st Thesis: "According to St Thomas and most theologians and contemplatives, these gifts (of wisdom and understanding) enable us, in a manner, to perceive the Divine, tearing partly away the veil of the mystery and thus giving us a knowledge *midway* between that of faith and the face to face or beatific. Now neither the first (intermediary) nor the second

(face to face) has anything whatever in common with Ontologism."[1]

This last phrase should be noted in answer to a most false insinuation. The *natural* vision of God alone belongs to Ontologism, but emphatically not the *supernatural* vision, with or without infused species, equally allowed by St Thomas himself.

2nd Thesis: " According to these witnesses and many others, the above-named *intermediate* vision does not ordinarily include, but may however include, *per modum transeuntis*, the face-to-face vision itself, which only differs from that of the blessed in intensity and duration."[2]

In support of this, Fr. Arintero, in a note, quotes at random St Thomas, Blessed Albert the Great, St Augustine, St Basil, St Ambrose, St Bonaventure, St Teresa, St John of the Cross, Alvarez de Paz, Schram, Philip of the Holy Trinity, Blosius, Ven. Bartholomew of the Martyrs, Antony of the Holy Spirit, Suarez, Vallgornera, Cardinal Bona, Benedict XIV, Dionysius the Carthusian, Fr. Nouet, Ribet, and so on.[3] We find ourselves, then, in good company; yet even so, the author has omitted the most beautiful texts of St Thomas, of Peter Lombard, of Origen, etc., which I cite *elsewhere*. It is, as we see, the whole of tradition.

When M. Saudreau understands the meaning of these two theses, it is clear that he will not credit Fr. Arintero with invention, as he has Fr. Poulain, nor charitably commiserate with him, as he has with me, for allowing himself to be carried away by an opinion " more than strange," " unacceptable," and not " practicable."

He ought then to admit his mistake, to recognize that the

[1] " *Según santo Tomás y la generalidad de los teologos y contemplativos, estos dones* (wisdom and understanding) *nos permiten percibir de algún modo lo Divino, rasgando un poquito el velo del mysterio y dandonos asi un conocimiento* intermedio *entre él de la fe y el facial o beatifico y que, a semejanza de este ultimo, nada absolutamente tiene que ver con el Ontologismo* " (p. 58).

[2] " *Según estos y otros muchos testimonios, no solo cabe la referida* visio intermedia, *sino que a veces*, per modum transeuntis, *puede caber la misma* facial, *no diffiriendo de la que tienen los* comprensores *sino en la intensidad y duración* " (*ibid.*, p. 62).

[3] One more decisive text from Dionysius the Carthusian: " *Via unitiva . . . in qua consistit Mystica illa quam describit magnus Dionysius theologia, est secretissima mentis cum Deo locutio*, supermentalisque visio, *quae in apice affectus consummatur et ecstasim operatur* " (*Opera omnia*, vol. 41, pp. 155, 253; *De contempl.*, a. 19).

accusation of *invention* has not a shadow of foundation. We are here concerned with a very old metaphysical problem much deeper and more complex than he thought, and one that it is impossible to solve by means of artless argument such as that of the assumed incompatibility of all intermediate knowledge with the wayfaring state. . . .

It is true that contemplatives at times only bear witness of the marvellous *effects* by which the divine action in their souls is easily recognized; but occasionally they also bear witness of the *cause* which produces these effects: they have the ineffable certitude of apprehending or perceiving the divine Agent himself in his action. Now these two points of view, far from being opposed or mutually exclusive, are, on the contrary, united and complete one another. . . .[1]

To accept from prejudice only the half of their testimony is to mutilate it and to disfigure mysticism. . . .

[1] St Teresa expressly teaches that the truth of this union with God " becomes more manifest *by its effects* as time goes on . . . the soul feels certain there must be someone within it who lances forth these darts . . . there is a Sun whence this brilliant light streams forth " (*Castle*, 7th M., ch. ii).

CHAPTER VIII

IS ALL IMMEDIATE PERCEPTION OF GOD IN THIS LIFE IMPOSSIBLE?

FIRST of all, the question here is not of *comprehending* God, but of perceiving his presence. *Non agitur*, says St Thomas, *de cognitione comprehensionis* (*sed visionis*) (I, q. lvi, a. 3). Again, it is admitted by all that such a perception is not within the *natural* power of man, especially since the condemnation of Ontologism and Naturalism.

The question here, then, is only of the power of God to make himself known to the soul in a supernatural manner, either in his presence only, or in his essence, but transitorily and in a lower manner than in the beatific vision, or in some other unknown way. Now to affirm that this is *impossible* to the divine power, as M. Saudreau does, is a strong statement, and one that we have no right whatever to make unless it can be shown that the thing in itself is absurd and an evident contradiction in terms.

But has such a proof been produced? Without hesitation we reply that it has *not*, and we dare add that it *never* will be, for what is not contradictory after death cannot be before. It is the process only which escapes us, but we have not the right to measure the divine methods by the narrow limits of our individual conceptions, nor to set such limits to God's goodness and power. God, says St Teresa, "desires that no limits should be set to his work" (*Castle*, 1st M., ch. i).

Now God makes himself fully seen in heaven; why, then, should not he allow a slight glimpse of this vision, in anticipation, to his future elect on earth? If it be true that contemplation here below is that sublime communing of the soul with God so magnificently described and extolled by our mystical saints; if it be true that the divine Majesty deigns to abase himself to man so far as to unite himself thus closely and familiarly with certain chosen souls, so that it has been called an ineffable contact, a kiss of love, a nuptial union . . . must we believe that the divine Spouse never shows himself in any way to the bride who asks it of him: *Ostende mihi faciem tuam;* that he never allows the least glimpse of himself through the half-open windows or the bars of this prison of our mortal

flesh, *respiciens per fenestras, prospiciens per cancellos*, as sings the *Canticle of Canticles?*

Assuredly not. Nothing is impossible to love, when it is divine love. And if the philosopher does not understand the *why*, let him be silent and adore, but let him never say: it is too beautiful! it is impossible! After the marvellous fact of the Incarnation nothing is incredible any longer.

We have known true contemplatives who have been imprisoned by their directors in this state of doubt, thinking themselves the victims of some pious illusion, yet tortured at the same time by contrary conviction, who have expressed their thanks to us in these warm words: "You have freed my soul. . . ."

They will henceforth place full confidence in the solemn promise of our Lord, no longer twisting it from its literal sense: *Si quis diligit me, diligetur a Patre meo, et ego diligam eum et* manifestabo ei meipsum (Joan. xiv 21).

Henceforth they will not fear to address the Beloved in the ardent prayer of St John of the Cross:

> "Reveal thy presence,
> And let the vision and thy beauty kill me.
> Behold, the malady
> Of love is incurable
> Except in thy presence and before thy face."
> (*Spir. Canticle* xi).

And after having been heard beyond all hope, after crying in ineffable ecstasy: "Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, and comely!" (*Cant.* i 15; v 10), they rather repeat the loving and so touching complaint of this same saint: "Turn away thine eyes, my Beloved, for I die! . . ." (*Spirit. Cant.*, xiii).

It is not permissible to take—as do our opponents—as a starting-point in their exegesis this assumed "impossibility" as though it were a self-evident principle of reason, a criterion of common-sense, in order to interpret the mystical facts that have been repeated a thousand times throughout the ages. These facts can only be surveyed from an historical standpoint and in nowise from an assumed metaphysical impossibility.

The serious consequences of so arbitrary and false a starting-point may be imagined. All texts of the great mystics, clearly affirming the contrary, must be interpreted, not in their natural and obvious sense, but as allegories or metaphors. Willy-nilly, they must yield to the needs of a foregone

conclusion; they must be extended on this bed of Procrustes, there to be tortured and amputated without pity.

These new exegetes remind us of phantoms returned from the middle ages, affirming on the strength of an older physics that the antipodes cannot exist, because men could not walk head downwards; insisting on treating the testimony of distant explorers, themselves returned from the antipodes, as fables and allegories.

St Thomas, who had experienced it, had already answered this *a priori* thesis of impossibility by this solemn statement whose clearness defies all cavilling: " Even in this life, when the eye of the soul has been purified by the gift of understanding, God may be seen in a certain manner ": *In hac etiam vita, purgato oculo per donum Intellectus*, Deus quodammodo videri potest (I-II, q. lxix, a. 2, ad 3).

The holy Doctor loves to repeat the same thing: *Homo etiam in hac vita, praelibationem futurae manifestationis accipit* (*In III*, dist. xxiv, q. 1, a. 1). He does not even reject the possibility of perceiving in a passing way like St Paul the divine essence itself: *Quando non utitur corporeis sensibus, aut etiam imaginatione, sicut accidit in raptu, potest contemplatio hujus vitae pertingere ad visionem divinae essentiae* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 5, c.).

And St John of the Cross adds: " It is God himself [el mismo Dio] who is then felt and tasted, though not manifestly and distinctly, as it will be in glory. . . . This knowledge savours, in some measure, of the divine essence and of everlasting life " (*Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. 26). These words are certainly surprising, yet they carry with them an indisputable theological authority, and they add precision to the figures and images already employed by St Teresa, who showed us in the seventh Mansion that " our pitiful God removes the scales from its eyes " (*Castle*, 7th M., ch. i).

We will spare the reader the innumerable texts of a similar kind from St Teresa and the great mystics, the literal sense of which was accepted by Benedict XIV: *Deus se illis ostendit speciali modo* (see above, p. 243) and with which Fr. Poulain filled two of the most convincing chapters of his book. Let us rather seek the *manner* in which this vision takes place, *quodammodo videri potest;* and St Thomas will once more satisfy our lawful curiosity by explaining to us *how* what he calls an " experimental knowledge " of the divine, *perceptio experimentalis*, is brought about (I, q. xliii, a. 5, ad 2; *In I*, dist. xv, q. 2, ad 5; *In I*, dist. xiv, q. 2, a. 2, ad 3).

CHAPTER IX

HOW CAN THIS IMMEDIATE PERCEPTION OF GOD BE BROUGHT ABOUT?

ST THOMAS has told us, and constantly repeats,[1] that the contemplation of God *on this earth*, *praesentis vitae*, has three quite different methods: *divine*, *angelic*, or *human*. "*Sciendum quod Deus* tripliciter *contemplari potest.*"

He teaches us that God may be contemplated (1) in his essence, as by St Paul in his rapture; (2) in impressed infused species, like the angels; (3) in the mirror of sensible creatures and of concepts which our mind discovers and abstracts from reason and faith.

This last manner, being indirect and reflected, belongs to ordinary or acquired contemplation, and is outside our subject.

The first method, the vision of God in his essence, though if not equal to the beatific vision, at least much lower and "intermediate between the face-to-face vision and the indirect vision of faith," is admitted by St Thomas, Benedict XIV, and the generality of theologians—with certain exceptions, such as M. Saudreau, who deems it impossible—and with them we too admit it, at least in a passing manner, *per modum transeuntis*.[2]

It is generally thought to be very rare, but this is a question of statistics far beyond the cognizance of man and better left to the secret judgements of God. In our own opinion, nothing obliges us to restrict it to Moses and St Paul. The Blessed Virgin may well have been favoured with it, as St Bernard maintains, and perhaps many other saints known and unknown.[3]

[1] I, q. lvi, a. 3, c.; *In II Sent.*, dist. iv, a. 2, c.; dist. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1, c.; *De Verit.*, q. viii, a. 3, ad 17; II-II, q. clxxx, a. 6; I, q. xii, a. 9, c., etc. "*Non est inconveniens et superfluum multis modis Deum cognosci posse ab eodem intellectu*, sc. *visione beata*, *scientia infusa et acquisita*" (John of St Thomas, vol. vi, p. 632).

[2] "These essential visions are transient and of most rare occurrence, and scarcely ever granted, and to very few" (St John of the Cross, *Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. 24).

[3] *Cf.* Vallgornera, *Theol. myst.*, q. 3, disp. 4, a. 5, n. 2; Card. Bona, *De discret. spirit.*, c. 18, n. 7. Fr. Maréchal (*Recherches des sciences religieuses*, March, 1914, pp. 145-162) and Mgr. Waffelaert (*cf.* Van der Meersch, *De Deo Uno et Trino*, pp. 243-244) are both of opinion

For this vision to be possible in this life, St Thomas lays down but one psychological condition, that of complete detachment from the senses. *Impossibile est quod homo in statu viae videat Deum per essentiam*, sine abstractione a sensibus (II-II, q. clxxiv, a. 1). Now this condition may be realized not only after death but also during life, as for example in the ecstatic state. Whence the distinction of St Thomas between the sensible life *in act*, wherein this vision is impossible, and the sensible life *in power*, in which latter, through the complete silence of the senses, it becomes possible (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 5).

In reality all this is very simple and easy to understand, and controversy only arises in connection with the second mode of contemplation, according to St Thomas, through impressed infused species, or infused knowledge, after the manner of the angels—which we have called the immediate perception of God, not in his essence but in his *operations* in our souls—and we hasten to attack the core of the subject.

For greater clearness and security we start from a point recently conceded by our opponents, who doubtless deem it of little importance, whilst for us it is a main point.

In his charming book on *God*, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange admits that in infused contemplation " the Holy Spirit makes himself felt to us as soul of our soul, life of our life " (p. 717), and defining this idea still more in the *Vie spirituelle* (October, 1920, pp. 19-20), he writes without hesitation: " The mystical life is the Christian life, that has, in a sense, become conscious of itself. . . . The presence of God makes itself felt in us as the life-giving principle."

The similarity of these words with those of St Teresa will be noticed: " Our Lord," she declares, " now will have the soul to see, as it were, with the naked eye, as men speak, this particular help of grace " (*Life, ch.* xiv).

In the same way, Fr. Joret, in the *Vie spirituelle* (July, 1920, p. 283), admits that infused contemplation is characterized by " the undergoing of an experience through a kind of psychical passiveness " of an act of God, and by " an impression, more or less sensible, of outside intervention." And he adds

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that this vision may be frequent. Bl. John Ruysbroeck considers it as the normal " summit " of mystical contemplation (*Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, July, 1922, p. 250, and July, 1923, p. 256).

(September, 1920, p. 449): "We obtain knowledge of them (the divine operations within our souls) as we do of our ordinary actions, *neither more nor less.*"

Therefore, we might at once answer: *Then—as in our ordinary acts—we also obtain immediate knowledge of* him *who operates within us; we obtain knowledge both of his operation and of his real presence, without, however, perceiving his essence.* This is all that we ask.

But, without hastening to arrive at a conclusion, we shall begin by expounding the philosophical theory.

From this starting-point, in the wake of St Thomas, I reason thus: The action of God in our souls, like all outside action that strikes us, when it becomes conscious, makes us apprehend at once and immediately *both the action and the agent* as present, or in other words, makes us apprehend *the agent in his action* within us, without any induction and by a simple glance: in the action the agent is made apparent to the extent to which he makes himself manifest. *Simul enim dum videtur effectus*, says St Thomas, *videtur et causa in ipso . . . est visio utriusque. . . . Haec cognitio*, he adds, *non est discursiva* (sed intuitiva) . . . una videt Deum in alia (*Contra Gent.*, III, ch. xlix, 1). Thus there is no reasoning, but simple intuition.[1] This mode of seeing God, then, is brought about thanks to the action of God received within us with consciousness. Now the *conscious impression of an action received* is, in the language of the schools, an *impressed species, quasi species impressa rei visae*, says St Thomas (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1).[2]

And since there is no created species capable of representing the very essence of God in his full and ineffable unity, this mode of vision differs essentially from the vision of the divine essence. St Thomas again observes in the same place: *Non est igitur possibile quod per hunc modum cognitionis ipsam essentiam* (Dei) *videant.*

[1] Since the action and the agent are inseparable, we cannot feel the action without the presence of the agent. This is an immediate intuition. On the other hand, in the example which Fr. Poulain has so unhappily chosen, *By knowing the law we recognize a lawgiver*, the mind forms a reasoning and passes by induction from the one to the other.

[2] *Ita "lapis videtur ab oculo corporali per similitudinem suam in ipso relictam (speciem impressam) . . . et hic quidem modus videndi (Deum) convenit angelo secundum conditionem naturae suae. . . . Ad hunc modum . . . elevatur homo per gratiam . . . sicut in viris contemplativis patet"* (*In II*, d. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1).

Nevertheless, this mode, being intuitive and without reasoning, is truly, in a certain manner, *quodammodo*, a vision of God or of the presence of God, and St Thomas does not hesitate to call it so and to make it the second kind of vision; it is intermediate, *media est*, between the vision of God in his essence, such as St Paul had, *qualem habuit Paulus in raptu*, and the indirect and reflected vision in the mirror of concepts abstracted from reason and faith, which is the process of ordinary or acquired contemplation.

This mode of vision, then, directly reaches the existence and presence of God in his act, and also the nature of that act, which always expresses or reveals something: either the sole presence of the divine Agent, or, partially, his unknown nature, or his designs and his will. And the most fruitful reasonings may be grafted on to these revelations vouchsafed to the contemplative in order to enrich his knowledge of God and to inflame his love. But these consequences and these reasonings are the natural outcome of contemplation, and not the act of infused contemplation itself.

It might seem at first from this theory that God was no longer contemplated *in himself* but in created *effects*, and that we thus return to the theory of indirect knowledge which we are opposing. But this is only an apparent and superficial view.

However small its acquaintance with the science of ideas known as ontology may be, the mind must have learnt to distinguish between two kinds of effects: the *passive effect* and the *reacting effect*. Thus, when the fire warms my hand it is a purely passive effect. Fire also brings about the hatching of an egg or a chemical reaction. This is a reacting effect, very different from its cause, whereas the warmth is the expression or actual manifestation of the fire. From this essential difference between these two kinds of effects it follows that it is only in the *passive effect*, or in *impressed species*, that the agent is apprehended at the same time as the action and without reasoning, *est visio utriusque simul;* by no means so in the *reacting effect*, since it is not the expression of the agent. Here the reasoning must needs always come in to refer back from the effect to the agent, or to show, for instance, that the sign or intermediate image resembles it.

Now we in no way admit that the contemplative has consciousness only of the *reacting effects* of the divine action

in his soul, such as the outbursts of love which it may cause, or the change of life which it may bring about. This would only be an indirect apprehension of God by reasoning, one which would refer back from the effects to their cause, and not as yet an intuition of the divine operation itself, *simplex intuitus*. In the same way, if he had consciousness only of an image or of a symbolic sign awakened in his imagination by the divine act, it would only be an interior vision or an apparition, and certainly not a contemplation.[1]

We maintain, on the contrary, that there is a direct intuition of the act of God, or of God in his action. In order to meet his God, the contemplative has only to enter into himself and to consider him in the inmost recess of his soul, and as the mainspring of his acts of love and of supernatural life, for God, St Thomas tells us, is there present and acting: *Oportet quod Deus sit in omnibus rebus intime . . . sicut agens adest ei in quod agit*. Not only is he present and acting, but he informs our consciousness immediately by his act: *Oportet enim omne agens conjungi ei in quod immediate agit, et sua virtute illud contingere* (I, q. viii, a. 1, c.).

This informing, which remains unconscious in the ordinary ways of grace, becomes more or less manifest or conscious in the mystical ways, and herein lies an essential difference between the two ways. We have already given an account of the wonderful experience of this which St Teresa had (*Mystical Phenomena*, p. 150), by which she was enabled to learn how God was present in her in spite of the statements of one of those "half-learned ones" whose direction caused her so much suffering.

We are quite willing to grant that God is only perceived here in that *passive effect* which is called an *action received* or a created *impressed species*, but we stoutly deny this impressed species to be only a reflection or an intermediate image; it is neither the object seen, *id quod*, nor the mirror in which it is seen, *id in quo*: it is only a condition or "cognitional determinant" of the vision of the agent who strikes the sight whilst remaining unknown in his essence. St Thomas repeats this often enough.

[1] We find the same distinction in St Bonaventure. "God may be present in our souls," he says, "in three ways: either in a passive effect, *in effectu proprio*, which is contemplation; or in a sign from him, *in signo proprio*, which is an apparition; or else in his beatific vision, *in lumine suo*, which is the face-to-face vision of heaven" (*In II Sent.*, d. xxiii, a. 2, q. 3, c.).

In the same way, says the holy Doctor, the light, although it is a means of vision, in no way prevents vision from being immediate: *Non est medium* in quo *Deus videatur, sed* sub quo *videatur, et hoc non tollit immediatam visionem Dei* (I, q. xii, a. 5, ad 2).

Thus, by seeing God in his act we see him *in himself*, and not through an image from without; as when we see a man present to our sight and through the light which enables it to act, we see him *in himself* and not in an image apart from him: *Alia enim est cognitio qua cognoscitur aliquis homo* in se ipso (*per speciem impressam*), *et alia qua cognoscitur* in sua imagine . . . *et tunc non dicitur res cognosci* in se ipsa *sed* in suo simili (I, q. xii, a. 9, c.).

Applying these ideas to the first contemplative, Adam, and asking himself: *Utrum Adam viderit Deum per essentiam?* St Thomas answers the question in the negative, and to the objection that if God be not seen in his essence he is no longer seen without mediation, the holy Doctor makes this beautiful and enlightening reply: "Adam saw God directly and without mediation, *sine medio*, not that he saw him in his essence, but in another way, intuitive and without any exercise of reason—that is, through an impressed species, or by the spiritual effect which he imprinted directly on his understanding, after the manner of the angels in their first state." *Dicitur Deum* sine medio *vidisse, non quia per essentiam videret, sed quia non per modum argumentationis ex creaturis sensibilibus procedens, in cognitionem ejus deveniebat, sed mediante effectu spirituali* (*species impressa*) *in intellectum ejus resultante, sicut angeli in primo statu* (*Deum*) *videbant* (*In II*, d. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1). And we know that, according to St Thomas, the *impressed species* is the type of immediate perception, the only one in this life that dispenses with reasoning.

St Thomas, then, was consistent in maintaining in his definition of contemplation in the strict sense (*Mystical Phenomena*, p. 79) that God is seen therein in himself, *in se ipso*, and by no means in the mirror of his effects, *in effectibus, in imagine; cognoscitur in se ipso, et non in aliquibus suis effectibus;* and in adding that these effects are only *secondary* and *preparatory* to contemplation: *Contemplatio divinorum effectuum* secundario *ad vitam contemplativam pertinet, prout sc. ex hoc* manuducitur *homo in Dei* (*in seipso*) *cognitionem* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 4; q. clxxiv, a. 5; *cf. In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 2, a. 1; q. 1, a. 2, sol. 3).

Doubtless his philosophic theory of the intuition of the agent in his action itself, or of the object seen directly through its *impressed species*,[1] can only be applied to God and the divine act by *analogy*. Moreover, St Thomas is careful to qualify his statement: Quasi *species impressa rei visae*. But analogy is our only means of avoiding agnosticism. It is mysterious, certainly, but mystery is not confined to our subject; it is to be found everywhere in theodicy.

Let us rest content to remember that what we attribute to God by analogy is not, as has been falsely reiterated, unreal,[2] but, on the contrary, very real, because it assumes another mode infinitely more perfect. According to the wise counsel of Bossuet: "Let us hold fast to both ends of the chain." This is enough in this life, and we boldly conclude that, if contemplation is a passive state beneath the action of God, this *conscious passiveness* cannot possibly be other than an *impressed species* giving us an intuitive sensation of the divine Agent in his action. No scholastic philosopher can deny this without a flagrant contradiction in terms, for to *suffer* (pâtir) is to *receive the imprint of an action*, and *the action* is always *the revealing expression of the agent*—revealing at least its presence.

[1] See this Thomist theory in vol. i of our *Études philosoph.* (7th ed.), pp. 236-265, 370-401. *Revue thomiste*, December 1919, p. 312: *Théorie de la perception immediate des sens. Revue néo-scolastique*, May, 1921, p. 163: *Deux déviations de la théorie thomiste sur l'action transitive*. According to the Suarezians the *impressed species* does not suffice for perception of an object, and the *expressed species* (idea, concept) must always be an indispensable medium. Elsewhere we have vigorously opposed this opinion, which would tend to deny all immediate perception of reality. (See App. V.)

[2] M. Saudreau perpetually misunderstands the word *analogy:* "The attributes which we ascribe to God by analogy do not really exist in him" (*Les faits extraordinaires*, p. 126). With so rudimentary a philosophy one ought not to claim to decide the subtle questions of mystical theology.

CHAPTER X

THE FIVE SPIRITUAL SENSES

BELIEF among holy contemplatives in the immediate sensation of God, not, it is true, in his essence, but in his presence and his operations in the soul, finds its most striking expression in the formula and theory of the five spiritual senses, "which bear some likeness to the exterior senses," says St Teresa (2nd *Relat.* to Fr. Alvarez), for neither do these perceive the essence of the objects around us, but only their presence and their physical effect on our organs, and perceive these directly.

Here on earth, the intelligence, except as regards itself and its operations, only apprehends directly the abstract and ideal; the senses alone are able to apprehend concrete and present reality, and they apprehend this directly: to see, to touch, are for us the very type of intuition. *Intellectus*, says and repeats St Thomas, *directe non est cognoscitivus nisi universalium . . . sensus autem singularium* (I, q. lxxxvi, a. 1, etc.)

In order, then, to apprehend the presence of God within us otherwise than by abstract ideas and reasoning; in order to experience this divine presence in our souls, we need, as it were, spiritual senses. Hence the belief of the Fathers of the Church, theologians and contemplatives, as old and continuous throughout the centuries as the Church herself. Holy contemplatives seem to be endowed with a complete organism of spiritual senses, ready to be awakened and to vibrate beneath the divine touch of the Holy Spirit.

In his famous work Fr. Poulain has written several chapters concerning their numberless testimonies, which masters such as Dom V. Lehodey have declared to be "decisive" (*Les voies d'oraison*,[1] p. 311), and which, indeed, are so. Fr. Arintero, again, in his *Cuestiones misticas* (pp. 52 *ff.*), has added other valuable and not less decisive references. Nevertheless, both these writers, far from having exhausted the witnesses, have forgotten, it seems to me, the most beautiful texts of St Thomas, Peter Lombard, and Origen, which we shall soon offer to the reader.

[1] Eng. trans., *Ways of Mental Prayer.*

First of all, we must well understand that the words *senses* and *sensations* are often used in Holy Writ and by sacred orators and poets by way of metaphor and symbol. When St Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they were " the good *odour* of Christ unto God " (2 Cor. ii 15), or when we read in Deuteronomy (xxxii 39) that we can all *see* that our God is the only God and can *contemplate* him in his marvels, no one thinks this to mean an odour or a spiritual perfume or a natural vision of the divine Being. All this is so obvious that we need not insist on it.

The question, of course, is quite different. It is to know if in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church from the highest antiquity there is not to be found very explicitly stated the belief in the existence, in the souls of holy mystics, of real cognitive faculties, not similar but analogous to those of our five organic senses, and capable, like them, of apprehending directly, but without organs, concrete and, at the very least, spiritual realities.

For a reply we have again recourse to St Thomas, to whom we must ever return to know the true tradition of the Fathers which he summed up and classified so well in his wonderful synthesis.

Now St Thomas, in a famous discussion with the Master of the Sentences, Peter Lombard, has given us both the *proof* and the *theory* of the five spiritual senses. Let us begin with the *theory*.

Granted that to feel is to know the concrete, and that the senses are but a modified and imperfect participation in the spiritual intelligence from which they flow as from their source —*sensus est quaedam deficiens participatio intellectus* (I, q. lxxvii, a. 7, c.)—we must conclude that the senses, as regards the power they possess of apprehending the concrete, are in a high degree, although by analogy, contained in the intelligence, and that the words *to feel* and *sense* may, in a high degree, be applied to it.[1]

The angelology of St Thomas relies wholly on this beautiful theory. These pure spirits see, speak, hear each other: God himself is, pre-eminently, the Seer: ὁ θεός.

[1] *Sentire* (*aliquando*) *non accipitur pro actu exteriori sensus sed pro actu intellectus, secundum quod intellectus quandoque sensus dicitur* (*In IV*, dist. xliv, l. fin.). *In apprehensione intellectus creati est* receptio *et secundum hoc dicitur* (in 3 *De Anim.*, text. 2) *quod intelligere est* pati *quoddam* (*In III Sent.*, dist. xv, q. 2, a. 1).

Organs of sense can, of course, only be attributed to God and to the spirits by way of metaphor and poetic licence, but the senses themselves, as capable of knowing the concrete, are attributed to them really, although by way of analogy and in a very eminent manner.

The intelligence of pure spirits—far higher than ours, which here on earth, except as regards itself and its operations, has only the *abstract* and the *universal* for direct object—resembles, therefore, our knowledge of concrete realities through the senses. There is the same firmness and certainty of personal grip, the same ardent fulness of contact, of envelopment and penetration. Even though it may not always be powerful enough fully to penetrate the essences of things, it at least grasps their presence and their operations with the same certitude as the senses. The analogy is therefore complete, and St Thomas was right in saying that the intelligence of the spirits may be called a sense: *Intelligere est quoddam pati . . . quandoque sensus dicitur.*

The spiritual senses are not, then, according to St Thomas, new faculties, really distinct from the human intelligence, but only modal forms of its inherent aptitude for apprehending concrete realities directly, after the manner of pure spirits. Moreover, according to the holy Doctor, in order to attain to the act of contemplation or mystical sensation, they require two means, *duobus mediis*, analogous to those of the external senses. On the one hand *impressed species*, representing the objects to be perceived; then a *light* which enlightens them by uplifting the natural power of the human mind, as we have already explained above (pp. 68, 69).

Not only have human souls spiritual senses which will be employed in the next life, but Catholic doctors have endeavoured to learn whether they cannot be used here below, by way of exception, in the natural order, to perceive without having recourse to the corporal organs. St Augustine, following the Platonic school, did not hesitate to believe this and to maintain that in certain cases—such as sleep, fainting, and the approach of death—the soul was able *naturally* to act thus, without the use of organs and as a pure spirit. We shall see later (p. 433) that this was his explanation of such curious phenomena as second sight and telepathy.

St Thomas, on the contrary, with all the peripatetics, denied this possibility, at least in the natural order, while fully granting it in the *supernatural.*

Thus, as all theologians affirm, the human soul of our Lord possessed in an eminent degree all the spiritual senses of pure spirits, and, as the Gospels bear witness, made use of them. It remains to be seen if the mystical saints, who participate to so high a degree in the life of Christ, have not also a share in those supernatural senses and in all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit with which his holy soul was endowed.

St Thomas again is our informant, in that curious controversy with Peter Lombard to which we have referred. The latter, indeed, in keeping with all tradition, rightly taught that the souls of mystical saints were endowed with spiritual senses, but he endeavoured to restrict these senses to that of touch. *In sanctis vero quasi solus est tactus.*

Here is the curious reason put forward by the Master of the Sentences in order to justify his thesis: " Christ is the head; the mystical saints are only members; now in the members there is only the sense of touch, whilst in the head alone are united all the organs of the five senses; therefore the mystical saints have only the sense of spiritual touch. Moreover," he adds, " touch alone is indispensable to the mystical life as it is to the corporal."

To so feeble an argument, wholly *a priori*, St Thomas was easily able to oppose the experience of the mystical saints, together with his own, as well as the formal teaching of the Fathers of the Church. There was merely an embarrassment of choice, but he contented himself with quoting Origen, one of the most ancient of the Fathers (185-254).

" Origen," he says, " clearly distinguishes five spiritual senses when he writes that spiritual sight is in order to see God, hearing to hear his word, smell to perceive the good odour of Christ, taste to taste his sweetness, touch to handle, with St John, the Word of life. Now the mystical saints have all these senses, therefore it is not true to say that they have only that of touch."[1]

[1] " *In sanctis vero quasi solus tactus est.*" *Hoc videtur esse falsum : quia Origenes* (*super Levit.*, homil. III, § 7, col. 432, t. 2) *distinguit quinque sensus spirituales, dicens : quod visus spiritualis est ut videamus Deum ; auditus autem ut audiamus quis loquitur ; odoratus per quem odoramus bonum odorem Christi ; gustus ut gustemus ejus dulcedinem ; tactus ut palpemus cum Joanne Verbum vitae. Haec autem omnia sunt in omnibus sanctis. Ergo non solum habent tactum. Dicendum, quod sensus spirituales possunt distingui per similitudinem ad actus sensuum corporalium ; et* sic sunt in omnibus sanctis ut dicit Origenes: *vel per similitudinem ad quasdam proprietates sensuum, secundum quod tactus*

And let it be observed that there is no question here of *metaphorical senses*, for to confine metaphor to the sense of touch alone would have no object and would be absurd; this passage, then, speaks of quite real although spiritual senses, analogous only with our organic senses; on the other hand, it should be noted that it affirms their existence and employment *in this life* by contemplatives, for in the next life, in which we shall be admitted to the face-to-face vision of God, the question cannot arise.

Nevertheless, after having approved Origen, as against Peter Lombard, St Thomas with his habitual respect endeavours to discover some acceptable sense in the text criticized: it only wished to infer that, the number *five* signifying plenitude, this plenitude of grace must be reserved for Christ alone, to the exclusion of the saints. *In Christo autem* (sunt) *omnia simpliciter quae pertinent ad perfectionem gratiae; ideo in Christo dicuntur omnes sensus, in aliis autem solus tactus.* Thus to Peter Lombard the number *five* is symbolic, but the senses themselves real, although analogous, *per similitudinem ad actus sensuum corporalium.* The reality of the spiritual senses, like that of the " sense of the divine "—or experimental and concrete perception of divine things—is, to St Thomas, entirely beyond dispute.

For brevity's sake St Thomas cited only the witness of Origen, but he might have quoted a multitude of others, notably this beautiful and noble passage from St Augustine's *Confessions* (X, ch. 7):

" O my God, what is it that I love when I love thee ? not corporal beauty, majesty of aspect, nor brilliancy of light, so pleasant to the eyes, nor the sweet melody of every kind of song, nor the sweet perfume of flowers, nor the taste of honey and manna, nor bodily embrace. Not these do I love in my God. And yet I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and food, and embrace, experienced in the inward man. My soul sees a light which is not of space, hears a sound which fails not with time, smells a perfume which the wind carries not away, tastes a food that eating lessens not, and embraces an object which satiety breaks not asunder. This is what I love when I love my God."

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est necessarius, alii autem non ; et sic, quia in aliis sanctis sunt omnia quae sunt de necessitate salutis, in Christo autem omnia simpliciter quae pertinent ad perfectionem gratiae ; ideo in Christo dicuntur omnes sensus esse, in aliis autem solus tactus (*In III*, dist. xiii, expositio textus).

In addition to St Augustine we might quote a thousand other passages from St Ambrose (*in Psalm.* 118, ser. 6), from St Bonaventure (*The Seven Ways of Eternity*, vi, dist. 2), from Hugh of St Victor (*De arca Noe*), from Richard of St Victor (*De gradibus violentae charitatis*), from St Gregory, St Bernard, Albert the Great, and St Thomas himself, who often returns to the subject (*Opusc.* 61 and 65; *in Philipp.* ii 2; *in Psalm.* xxxiii, etc.); from Cassian, from Philip of the Trinity, (*Disc. prelim.*, a. 8); from St Alphonsus, Tauler, Alvarez de Paz, Antony of the Holy Spirit, Vallgornera, Honorius of St Mary, Gerson, Blosius, Dionysius the Carthusian, Ruysbroeck, Thomassin (*De Deo*, VI, c. 5, on the sight of and the whole contact with the supreme Good); and from all the mystical saints, for it would be easier to cite those that have not spoken of them, if such indeed exist.

Let us, then, conclude with Fr. Nouet: " After the opinion of so many such enlightened and holy Fathers, it would be rash indeed to call in doubt what all mystical theologians teach with them as to the number of the five spiritual senses. . . . All the masters of the spiritual life agree on this point, that the most perfect union with God that it is possible for the soul to have in this life consists in this wonderful experience of the inward senses " (*Conduite de l'homme d'oraison*, VI, ch. 14; *cf.* V, ch. 17).

The only difficulty, the same writer adds, is to distinguish which one or more of the five spiritual senses it is that plays the leading role in the mystical life, but it is clear that this must vary according to the degree of union of each contemplative, and perhaps also with the temperament and character of each one of them, as also with the infinite variety of graces that he has received from God: *dividens singulis prout vult.*

Fr. Arintero was right, then, in entering a strong protest against the bold attempt that desired to strike out the spiritual senses from mysticism, " as undeniable," he says, " as they are wonderful."

CHAPTER XI

IS IT POSSIBLE TO DISPENSE WITH IMPRESSED SPECIES IN THE "INTERMEDIATE" VISION OF GOD?

WE have seen (p. 76) that certain theologians, such as Antony of the Holy Spirit and Philip of the Trinity, both Carmelites, Fr. Lahousse, Jesuit, and several others less known, had held that the vision of God by contemplatives always takes place without impressed species, and by means of direct informing by the divine essence, as in the beatific vision, except that the *lumen gloriae* is replaced by a lower light of a different kind, or, at the very least, of a much lower degree of intensity.

More recently this same theory, which Fr. Poulain could not bring himself to uphold, seems to have been taken up by other theologians, such as the famous Fr. Arintero in Spain, and in France by Fr. Montagne, editor of the *Revue thomiste*.

The former wrote to us, April 4, 1921:

"As to knowing if this is by means of *infused species*, it appears certainly to be so for the *lumen propheticum*, but as regards the *intuitive sight* of the gift of understanding or the *taste of the gift of wisdom*, I think not. . . ."

As for Fr. Montagne, he summed up, in the *Revue thomiste*, the data experienced in mysticism, as witnessed by the great contemplatives, as follows:

"We learn from their school: (*a*) that the mystical state is an experimental knowledge of God and the sense of his presence within us (*cf.* St Teresa, *Life*, ch. x); (*b*) that this experimental perception takes place without intermediary, without even the mediation of images or representations, but by means of a direct union, 'in the depth' or 'at the apex of the soul'; (*c*) that this union, or, as it is called by W. James, this 'theopathic' state, is brought about under the action of God, without, however, the activity of the soul being annihilated," and so on (*Revue thomiste*, 1908, p. 193).

The precision and clearness of these conclusions leave no doubt as to the mind of the writer. He does not admit impressed species in the contemplatives' vision of God: it always attains to the divine essence.

We have already given the reasons (pp. 76-77) which prevent us from sharing this opinion, in spite of all the respect with which it inspires us; for it approaches much more closely to the facts observed than does the audacious denial of all vision of God among contemplatives, as is maintained by the school of M. Saudreau. We hold, however, that it seems to us to be a useless exaggeration.

The partisans of this opinion raise this objection: Why are impressed species needed in the mystical vision when they are not required in the beatific vision? Most certainly, we answer, it is not in the name of pure possibility that we oppose this theory, but in the name of mystical facts.

These facts show us that there is an intuition of God of a much lower kind—and not only of a lesser degree—than the beatific intuition. The vision of God in his essence, in fact, is synthetic and entire; the contemplation of God in his impressed act in our souls is analytical and fragmentary (pp. 67-70). The former is natural to God alone; the latter, natural to the angels, is supernatural for contemplative man.

This noble hierarchy of beings, *God*, *the angels*, *man*, according to the three possible modes of contemplating God, is a stroke of genius of St Thomas in his interpretation of mystical facts; it is accepted by all theologians, and to grant the curtailment proposed by our opponents would be to mutilate it. Before being raised to the synthetic contemplation of the divine essence, the contemplative surely is raised to an intermediate or quasi-angelic stage, that of a broken contemplation by impressed species; *media est*, as says St Thomas.

Our *second* argument is based on the fact upon which St Thomas lays stress, that in order to contemplate the divine essence itself, total alienation of the senses is required (pp. 73-4). Now in the mystical state this is but rarely produced; we must then admit the other kind of vision, through impressed species.

Finally, *confirmation* of our thesis may be drawn from universal experience. No intuition, even that of the *ego* in the spiritual consciousness, directly attains to the essence of things, but only to the operations which reveal them to us little by little. The intuition of the act of God, then, is a first stage, and, as it were, a preparation suitable for the future intuition of his essence.

Now it is precisely this which we, with Dionysius, call the

sense of the divine, *πάθων θεία*, *patiens divina*, and as, to every good scholastic, a sensation without *impressed species* would be nonsense, like a triangle without its three angles, we must necessarily admit impressed species in contemplation, in the strict sense of the word.

To these arguments from reason let us add the *authority* of St Thomas. He says and repeats that there is on this earth a contemplation of God, intermediate between vision of the essence and vision in the mirror of creatures—that is, vision through infused impressed species. He teaches that this intermediate vision, proper to the angels, was the privilege of Adam, the first contemplative, when innocent. Might not this privilege, lost through original sin, have been regained through the merits of the Redeemer? . . . The trilogy of St Thomas in contemplation should then be maintained: *Sciendum quod* tripliciter *Deus contemplari potest*.[1]

In obscure and negative contemplation, in which the novelty of the object revealed just becomes apparent, only infused species of the merely natural and human order may be admitted, but in distinct and luminous contemplation super-sensible and truly angelic species seem to be required, according to the Thomists most faithful to the mind of the Master.[2]

[1] *In II*, dist. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1; dist. iv, a. 2, c. *De Verit.*, q. viii, a. 3, ad 17. *Sum. th.*, I, q. lvi, a. 3, c.; II-II, q. clxxv, a. 3, ad 1, etc.

[2] Vallgornera, O.P., holds that there are impressed species even in the most luminous contemplation: "*Caligines abscesserunt et venit . . clara serenitas, in qua aeterna majestas modo ineffabili videtur. Dantur animae* oculi *quibus Deum videat, i.e., lumen supernaturale et divinum, quod ad tantam ac mirabilem visionem sufficiat. Hoc non est lumen fidei, nec lumen sapientiae tantum, quod ad sic videndum parum est. Non est etiam lumen gloriae, quod patriae caelesti servatum est. Sed existimo quod est illud lumen quod D. Thomas* II-II, q. 175, a. 2, *prophetis datum est, vel aliud simile, quod fidem et sapientiam roboret, atque perficiat. Datur enim illi* (*animae*) species *quaedam Deum perfectissime repraesentans, quae* non per sensum ingreditur, *neque sensibus accipitur, neque aliis formis praehabitis componitur sed recenter intellectui infunditur. His autem duobus ornatus intellectus et altissimo auxilio communitus, videt Deum . . . non negando . . . non affirmando . . . sed sincerissime, et tranquillissime, et serenissime divinam Majestatem intuendo*" (*Schola Myst.*, q. 4, dist. 2, a. 8, n. 3). *Cf.* Alvarez de Paz, *De inquisit. pacis*, V, p. 3, ch. xiv. We commend this fine passage to the obstinate deniers of all vision of God.

CHAPTER XII

AN OLD OBJECTION AGAINST THE IMMEDIATE PERCEPTION OF GOD

THIS objection, reproduced by M. Saudreau, is based on the simplicity of the divine essence, which, according to our opponent, would prevent God from showing us only part of the great mystery: *All or nothing!* Fr. Arintero, having dared, with me, to say that " God tears away a little the veil of the mystery " . . . the good Canon at once answers him as he did me: " He holds then that there are parts in God ! . . . this is indeed the limit. . . ."[1]

To this objection, somewhat feeble, any of my students in philosophy would reply with a *distinguo:* In the divine essence there is undoubtedly no *real* distinction of attributes; this is certain, and even of faith: but that there is no kind of distinction, not even a *virtual* distinction, grounded in reality, I most strongly deny, for such a proposition was condemned by John XXII, in 1329.[2]

Without this virtual distinction, well grounded in reality, we must say that expressions such, for instance, as Intelligence and Liberty, or Justice and Mercy, have no meaning, that they are all synonymous, that God punishes through his mercy and forgives through his justice, that his operations *ad extra* and *ad intra* are identical, equally necessary or equally free; in a word, that all the divine names express only purely verbal distinctions, and that God remains entirely unknowable for us. This would be a victory for the agnostic nominalism of Maimonides or of the Modernists, so often refuted by St Thomas and rejected with such energy by the Councils.

This well-known antinomy of one and many in God,

[1] St John of the Cross had already said: " It is as if God drew back some of the many veils and coverings that are before [the soul] " (*Living Flame*, str. iv); " The soul beholds what God is . . . so may we see, when the palace is thrown open, both the magnificence of him who inhabits it, and what he is doing " (*ibid.*).

[2] Propositions 23 and 24 of Eckhart condemned in 1329: *Nulla distinctio in Deo esse vel intelligi potest. . . . Omnis distinctio est a Deo aliena* (*cf.* St Thomas, I, q. iii, a. 7).

then, is only apparent. We hold fast to both ends of the chain, as Bossuet says, even without knowing how they are to be joined; but St Thomas will throw a little light on the enigma.

All absolute perfections (*simpliciter simplices*) such as intelligence and liberty, justice and mercy, are in God *formally* and in an eminent degree, although in an analogous way to human perfections. It is this analogy or partial dissemblance which forbids us to think that they can be blended together without becoming confounded in the bosom of the Deity.

Far from that: in blending they become united without being destroyed, and their union—in spite of their apparent opposition, as that between justice and mercy—raises them to the most eminently pure state. They are then in God *formally*, like the notes of a higher harmony which is beyond us.[1]

So that there is nothing in common between the divine simplicity and that of a mathematical point. The latter is an infinite poverty of being; the former is a synthesis of an infinitely rich virtual multiplicity. We cannot, then, deny to this incomprehensible divine simplicity all the virtualities of the multiple without impoverishing it and unjustly rendering it inferior to the multiple.

Not only is this simplicity equal to the multiple, but it is infinitely higher, since it has all its advantages without its imperfections. Thus, for instance, its infinite perfections may become manifest, and in fact do become manifest, the one without the other, in a finite, partial, and successive manner, in time and space, such as they appear to us in the marvels of nature and of grace: none of them ever exhausts the capacity of infinite power and love.

The *a priori* principle, so improbable, of *all or nothing*, is already found wanting.

But if there is in God an infinite virtual multiplicity, it is doubtless indiscernible to the human eye, but why should not God, if it so please him, *make manifest* such or such virtually distinct aspects or points of view of the infinite Mystery without showing them all at once ? Even though the human intellect, by itself, is unable to discover them or distinguish between them in their wonderful unity—which is indeed indisputable, and which we willingly grant—why should God be powerless

[1] Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange has strongly insisted on this *formalness* which M. Saudreau misunderstands at the risk of falling into agnosticism. With so rudimentary a philosophy the problems of mysticism are insoluble !

to show them to us; to show us, for example, his presence without his essence, the negative aspect of this essence without its positive aspect,[1] or his operations in our souls without the ineffable operations of his life *ad intra?*

And what mortal man is there so bold as to dare thus to limit the infinite power of God? Against this limitless power all *a priori* deductions based on *all or nothing* will break themselves in vain.

Such a partial manifestation, as we have already said (p. 71), would be "an analysis and not a lie,"[2] just as the analyses and abstractions of man are not lies: Οὐδὲ γίνεται ψεῦδος χωριζόντων. "However small its resemblance to the divine essence," says St Thomas, "such knowledge is not false, but only incomplete."[3] It is based on reality, and allows of adaptations to the weakness of our human vision, incapable of vast syntheses. It is enough for us to see God in the way that he thus shows himself partially to see that it is indeed he, God himself, *el mismo Dio*, as, speaking as a theologian, St John of the Cross declares.[4]

Then, objects M. Saudreau, we do not see God as he is, but *otherwise than as he is!* Hear the reply of St Thomas: "To understand anything otherwise than it is, *intelligere rem aliter quam est*, has two meanings: if the 'otherwise' *affects the thing* to be known, it is not truly known; but if it *affects our mode of knowing it*, it remains none the less known."

Thus a concrete thing is truly known by an abstract idea, a material thing by an immaterial concept, a thing one and indivisible by an analytic view; and we are able to consider separately inseparable points of view.

Now this is precisely our case, and St Thomas's answer seems conclusive: *Si enim* aliter *sit* modus rei cognitae, *tunc*

[1] St Thomas expressly says: *Duplex est Dei visio: una quidem perfecta, per quam videtur (quid est) Dei essentia; alia vero imperfecta, per quam etsi non videamus de Deo quid est, videamus tamen quid non est* (II-II, q. viii, a. 7).

[2] In reproducing my text M. Saudreau writes *analogy* instead of *analysis*, and this mistake, twice repeated in spite of the absurdity of the meaning, demonstrates his lack of understanding of the metaphysical problem (*printed letter*).

[3] *Non potest forma per intellectum concepta repraesentare divinam essentiam complete, sed habet* aliquam modicam imitationem ejus . . . *nec tamen istae conceptiones sunt falsae, sed imperfectae* (*De Verit.*, q. ii, a. 1, c.).

[4] *Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. 26. "It is God himself who is then felt and tasted."

nullus intelligens intelligit rem aliter quam sit; . . . si autem sit modus cognoscentis, *sic quilibet intelligens rem materialem, intelligit aliter quam sit, quia res quae habet esse materiale, solum immaterialiter intelligitur* (*De Verit.*, q. ii, a. 2, ad 11; I, q. xii, a. 6, ad 2).

Even in the time of St Thomas he was confronted with the same difficulty: when he taught that all the angels do not necessarily know all the mysteries of grace, this objection, the second, was put to him: " All the angels see the divine essence, which is one and indivisible; therefore they must see all the mysteries contained in this essence." As will be seen, this is precisely M. Saudreau's *all or nothing*. Here is St Thomas's answer:

" Doubtless the angels see the Word and that which is contained in the Word, and it is in this vision that they discover the mysteries of grace. Nevertheless they neither see therein all the mysteries, nor see them with equal clearness, but only those which it *pleases God to show them* and in the measure in which it so pleases him."[1] God may then show us his essence partially or in a certain measure, and the *all or nothing* fails once more.

Of course, the process of this partial manifestation escapes us, but the *how* is here of little importance, " God being infinitely more powerful than we are able to understand," as St Teresa repeats.

We may, however, make use of a comparison. In the same way that the eye of a man colour-blind sees only a part of the light that strikes it, though that light shines in its fulness before it, so the contemplative, in the presence of the divine essence, only sees that which the imperfection of his vision allows him to see, or that which the good pleasure of God permits.

A little before, St Thomas had given an analogous explanation, observing that this fragmentary vision does not arise from the subdivision of the object itself, but from the imperfection of the subject, who cannot grasp all that he sees, according to the classic dictum: *totus sed non totaliter* (I, q. xii, a. 7, obj. 3). Willy-nilly, it must be fully recognized that the infinite can

[1] *Angeli vident Verbum et res in Verbo, et hac visione cognoscunt mysteria gratiae—non quidem omnia, nec aequaliter omnes—sed secundum quod Deus voluerit eis revelare* (I, q. lvii, a. 5). *Qui videt aliquid unum, non oportet quod omnia videat quae in eo sunt uniformiter, sive unite . . . sicut qui videt aliquod principium, non oportet quod videat omnes conclusiones virtute in eo existentes . . .* (*De Verit.*, q. xx, a. 4, c.).

only be received into a finite mind ideally divided; the *all or nothing* is impossible, for *to understand all is to be equal.*

Finally, and this is a main point, this objection of M. Saudreau, which is aimed, without achieving its end, against even the possibility of a partial and incomplete view of the divine essence, derived from a participation, in a lesser measure, in the *lumen gloriae*—a hypothesis which we do not admit—is even less successful in disproving our thesis of the perception of the presence and operations of God in our souls by created infused *impressed species*, which are necessarily many and fragmentary.

The latter, which are incapable of giving us the perception of the divine essence, only give us the intuition of the divine operations which are always revealers either of the presence of the divine Agent or of that which these actions express or represent to our intelligence, for an action is necessarily the partial expression of the agent and its outward manifestation. This is enough for us fully to maintain our thesis concerning a certain immediate perception of God, seen not in his essence, but in his operations; and to repeat with St Thomas *a propos* of Adam, the prototype of the contemplative: *Dicitur Deum sine medio vidisse . . . in hac etiam vita, Deus quodammodo videri potest.*

This thesis is only the logical conclusion from the fundamental principles of Thomist psychology, which the holy Doctor has been careful himself to draw.

CHAPTER XIII

IS THERE A LOVE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE?

OF the two elements of infused contemplation, *intuition* and *love*, which is essential and constitutive?

This is the eternal question of the relative importance of the intelligence and the will, which we meet here again, with even greater acuteness; for the mystical theory of contemplation would be completely travestied and disfigured if love were made to be its essential element at the expense of intuition.

We maintain, on the contrary, that intuition is the very essence of contemplation. Intuition is its *formal* cause, as say the scholastics, whereas love is both its *motive* cause and its *final* cause. St Thomas expressly teaches this in the passages we have quoted (p. 56).

"The contemplative life," he says, "chiefly consists in an operation of the understanding, and the very name *contemplation* signifies vision" (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2). And elsewhere he adds: "Although the contemplative life consists essentially in the understanding, it has its motive principle in the love which prompts us to the contemplation of God; and as the end corresponds to the principle, it follows that the term and the end of contemplative life is again love—that is to say, the soul delights in the vision of the object loved, and delight in the object contemplated in turn inflames love" (II-II, q. cliii, a. 7, ad 1).

But love by itself is a blind power, and if it often helps us to knowledge, it does so only indirectly by inciting the understanding to seek and to know: *inquantum*, says St Thomas, *movet rationem ad discernendum* (II-II, q. xlvii, a. 1, ad 1). The intuitive element of contemplation cannot then be replaced by the emotive one of love.

All the mystics, from Dionysius to St John of the Cross, teach the same doctrine, which is re-echoed by Benedict XIV in his famous work, where he several times repeats that the *intuition* of the divine is indeed the essential and formal element of contemplation, although love precedes it, accompanies it, and follows it. The word *intuition* is even twice repeated in the definition which he gives us of contemplation: *est simplex*

intellectualis intuitus *cum sapida dilectione divinorum, aliorumque revelatorum, procedens a Deo speciali modo applicante intellectum ad* intuendum . . . (*ibid.*, no. 6). It is a simple intuition of the divine, he says, accompanied by a gladsome love and proceeding from a very special application of our intellect to this intuition, brought about by God. It would be difficult to insist more strongly on this intuitive element.

If such authentic and authorized teaching be compared with certain new theories, it will come as a painful surprise to the reader to find that in these the affective element has entirely taken the place of the intuitive.

Here, we venture frankly to say, we have an invasion into mysticism of the subjectivism of modern philosophy, which, since the time of Suarez and Descartes, has completely suppressed the intuition of the non-ego, to confine us within the consciousness of the ego and its affections. Bergson himself has dared to place his finger on the wound, and, without having found the true remedy to heal it, has had at least the great courage to denounce it.

Subjectivism, for three centuries, has become the prevailing atmosphere; it is not, then, astonishing to meet with traces of it even in mysticism, even among the most estimable writers. The fear of the objective vision of God—though it is the most obscure and furthest from the beatific vision—ends by confining them in the prison of the ego and subjective ideas, from which they think it impossible to escape, in spite of the numberless witnesses of the most approved mystics in the Church; in whom they affect to discover only metaphors and symbols or pious illusions.

Here are a few of the most characteristic texts to which we have just referred:

"The essential act of contemplation," writes Fr. Pacheu, "is affective and not intellectual. . . . Contemplation is wrongly termed knowledge. In it the soul, strictly speaking, does not know, it is affected" (*Revue de Phil.*, 1913, vol. 22, p. 649). And in the following numbers of the same review he definitely places in opposition "the school of the heart, *schola affectus*," to the intellectual school and the rational methods of St Thomas (*Revue de Phil.*, May-June, 1921, p. 278).

Even among the usual disciples of the holy Doctor, who admit the *simplex intuitus*, we sometimes discover these acci-

dental inexactitudes of language. "Mystical contemplation," writes Fr. Joret, "is an affective experience. . . . It is a passive movement of love for God, *which commonly ends in a* (subjective and illusory?) *sense* of the presence of God" (*La Vie spirituelle*, July-September, 1920, p. 284).

Let us first note the subversive *effects* of such a theory.

1. We have seen (Chapter IV) that contemplation in the strict sense, according to all the mystical schools, takes place in the *apex of the spirit*, without abstraction from images. It is therefore a purely intellectual intuition, for the affective elements which follow from it are not necessarily produced without sensibility or sensible images, and are not essentially distinct from ordinary psychic states. To suppress intellectual intuition by putting affective states in its place would then be the very negation of contemplation.

2. But here is something no less serious. If it be the ardour of our love which "*ends in a sense*" of the presence of God, this presence then is nothing more than a delusion and a dream, a hallucinatory projection of our passionate love, which thinks it sees when it does not see. But is not this precisely the explanation put forward by the rationalists, in whose hands we thus place a weapon? Has not one of them explained the illusion of the perception of God by contemplatives who dream after the beatific vision, by saying that "the drawing near to the goal may give us the impression of having really touched it"?

The unlikeliness of such an explanation, which transforms all our mystical saints into dreamers and sufferers from hallucination, in spite of all the laws of psychology, has no need of special refutation. It is not for us to give it even apparent encouragement and support.

In order to nip such serious ambiguities in the bud we would reserve the term "(subjective) *sense of the presence of God*" to the ordinary ways of asceticism; and in mysticism replace it by that of "(objective) *sensation of the presence of God.*"

3. The third consequence, no less disastrous, which we have already stated (pp. 78, 79), is that, by substituting love for knowledge, our saints become no longer witnesses who relate accounts of the supernatural things they have heard or seen, since they have seen and heard nothing; they become no more than the impassioned interpreters of their subjective emotions, or at the best thinkers whose reasonings should be

treated with caution and may be freely criticized, instead of being accepted as authentic testimony.

Having thus shown the disastrous consequences of this theory, it remains for us to examine it in itself and to point out the intrinsic contradictions which render it impossible.

1. It is impossible to admit a love without some previous knowledge: *ignoti nulla cupido*. This is a metaphysical principle which has its value not only in the natural order, as Fr. Pacheu says, but at all times and in every place, like all metaphysical principles. All the more, if this love consists in a *possession* of the object loved—as in mystical contemplation—it would become absolutely unintelligible without the knowledge and consciousness of the beloved object which is possessed. Conscious possession implies knowledge, direct knowledge; intuition, if not of the essence, at least of the presence of the object possessed.

2. It is impossible for that state of conscious passivity, in which the contemplative feels himself overwhelmed by an outside and divine interference, as all our opponents recognize, not to produce in him a knowledge and even a direct perception of the action and of the agent which break in on him—for the action received with consciousness is necessarily perceived at the same time as the agent is perceived in his action.

Without wishing to revert to this enlightening theory, we will merely conclude that it renders impossible a passive love without knowledge and a direct perception of the object loved. Love without knowledge, then, is not a workable hypothesis.

Nor let it be replied that love also produces knowledge. Doubtless love and knowledge give strength to one another: the more one loves, the more one desires to know; but of itself, we repeat, love is a blind force, and if it enables us sometimes to know, it does so indirectly, by provoking the understanding to seek and to know: *inquantum*, said St Thomas, *movet rationem ad discernendum* (II-II, q. xlvii, a. 1, ad 1). There is, then, no love without knowledge.

In the main it is the same problem under another form that M. Brémond has recently met with in the writings of Nicholas of Port-Royal, where he reproaches certain mystics of his time for admitting a *contemplation without thought*—that is, without an object really perceived if it is present or represented by con-

cepts if absent. Such contemplation would be the contemplation *of nothing*, as unintelligible as a square circle or a circular square.

In ordinary or acquired contemplation—as all are agreed—supernatural objects are not directly perceived, but only represented by concepts abstracted from reason and faith. But if we admit, with St Teresa, that the *suspension* of the understanding and of its concepts takes place in extraordinary or infused contemplation, and even, as she clearly states, in the first degree of quiet, this contemplation sinks abruptly into nothingness of thought if the abstract concepts that have disappeared are not immediately replaced by a concrete perception (however obscure we may suppose it) of the presence of God and things divine.

M. Brémond seems to have caught a glimpse of this solution of the difficulty when he writes:

" One of the ways of grasping contemplation intellectually (or of preventing it from operating in the void) would be to liken it almost to the beatific vision, which, being of a high and distinct content, resembles more, or seems to resemble, rational knowledge. . . . Here, perhaps," he shrewdly adds, " might be found a final explanation and solution, *ipso facto*, of the famous controversy between M. Saudreau and Fr. Poulain; and the latter may perhaps be much nearer Nicholas than he thinks " (*Hist. litt.* IV, *L'école de Port-Royal*, pp. 564, 581).

If instead of Nicholas we read St Thomas, this would be correct. In making contemplation an act of the intellect, St Thomas places us in this dilemma: either the perception is by means of abstract concepts or by concrete vision, and when the concepts are suspended there remains nothing logically but the vision—if not beatific, at least much lower and " intermediate with the face-to-face," as Fr. Arintero says—and, as we say, by *impressed species*. Is it " through love of clear and distinct concepts " that we reason thus, as M. Brémond supposes ? Certainly not. Obscure vision is enough for us. It is to avoid the absurd hypothesis of an intelligence functioning in the void or of a contemplation without thought.

It is also out of respect for the witness of the mystical saints who, far from representing their love to us as blind and without thought, never cease telling us of their intimate relations with the Beloved, seen, heard, felt, possessed, known in an ineffable manner.

And lest it be said that their " *love can only express itself in*

terms of knowledge,"[1] we reply that it has not the right so to do. He who loves a friend, if he be absent, has no right to express his love, however ardent it may be, by crying: I see him, I hear him, I touch him ! and if he were to do so, really believing that he sees, hears, and touches him as though he were present, we should not hesitate to think him either a liar or a sufferer from hallucinations.

The language of love is made up of admiration, respect, recognition, kindness, friendship, devotion, intimacy, and not at all from the vocabulary of the outward senses, which would provide the least suitable and the most disparate expressions, for, as St Thomas observes, it belongs to the senses to know only objects that are present: *Est proprium sensus quod cognoscitivus est rerum praesentium* (I-II, q. xv, a. 1). Love may, on the contrary, make abstraction from the presence and actual sight.

The theory of contemplation and of love without knowledge is, then, nothing but a hypothesis, which defies both metaphysics and psychology as well as the historic testimony of our saints. It is only a most futile exaggeration of the undisputed truth that in certain cases the degree of love may very much surpass, as we have already stated, the degree of knowledge.

[1] Joret, *La Vie spirituelle*, September, 1920, p. 464.

CHAPTER XIV

IS INFUSED CONTEMPLATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL?

IN reading at the head of Fr. Arintero's charming work this flamboyant title: *The heights of contemplation accessible to all*,[1] we admired the courage with which he unfurled the flag of the new school; but this claim to the equality of all in mysticism leaves us thoughtful and rather sceptical. . . .[2]

First of all, we are here concerned with mysticism in its strict sense, without the curtailments and mutilations by which the pen of M. Saudreau has reduced it to nothing more than the prayer of simplicity or a more or less advanced acquired contemplation, thus rendering the claim that it is accessible to all less unlikely.

Now, can the word *mysticism* itself be seriously associated with the expression *accessible to all?* If I consult the *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* or other similar works, at the word *Mysteria* I find that it comes from the Greek μυστήριον, which signifies a hidden, esoteric element, a secret reserved to privileged and chosen, and therefore more or less rare folk. "Mysticism accessible to all" seems, then, at first sight a great contradiction in terms: the two expressions cry out when placed together!

Fortunately the Western mind has a reserve of common sense which prevents it taking such brilliant hyperboles literally, and before passing to their practical application knows how, by some subtle *distinguo*, so to manipulate them as to make them more or less inoffensive!

The commentary of St Thomas goes still further as to this character, not accidental but essential, of rarity in mysticism;

[1] We are glad to learn that the author has agreed to suppress this title.

[2] Similarly M. Saudreau: "The way of contemplation is open to all" (*Vie d'union*, no. 317). Also Fr. Lamballe: "Contemplation is the normal term of the spiritual life; souls thirsting for perfection have the *right* to aspire to it and their directors *ought* to encourage them" (*La Contemplation*, p. 105). According to them contemplation is necessary to perfection and therefore may not be refused to any soul faithful to grace. It can be the fruit of their merits: God owes it to them. Fr. Arintero adds that they can merit it, not only *de congruo*, but *de condigno!* (*Cuestiones misticas*, pp. 248-286).

in agreement with Dionysius he defines mysticism as an *occult* science, and therefore one reserved for a small number: *Mystica, i.e., occulta, quia excedit naturalem cognitionem.* Even more, as against the faith and theology which is taught to all, it is said to be intransmissible by means of human teaching: *indocibilis, i.e., quae humano magisterio doceri non potest.*[1] It is God alone who teaches it and who chooses his adepts. St Thomas would never thus have defined it if it had, on the contrary, been accessible to all, and if all were called to it by the sole fact of their having received the gifts of the Holy Ghost at baptism.

Benedict XIV also calls it *very rare: Rarissimi contemplationi vacant* (*De beatif.*, III, c. 26, n. 8); St Bernard says that there are *few* contemplatives; St Alphonsus Liguori says (*Homo apostol.*, append. I, n. 9) *very few: paucissimae, inquit sancta Teresia, sunt animae illae;* Fr. De Ponte says: *a very small number* (*Life of P. Alvarez*, chap 15, p. 161), etc. The new school, on the contrary, does not fear to declare it *very frequent.* The reader will judge on which side lies the novelty—or obstinate confusion with a very different phenomenon, *acquired* contemplation.

In order to lessen the contrast, our opponents reply that though all are called to infused contemplation, it is only a *very distant call*, like the *germ* of a vocation which circumstances very often prevent from developing. And they give us as a comparison the acorn (*Vie spirituelle*, November, 1921, p. 97). which may become a very fine oak, yet in certain countries rarely does so.

Doubtless the acorn can be said to be called to become a fine oak, for it has within itself at least the radical *active* power to do so. A block of marble, on the contrary, having only a *passive* aptitude to become " God, a table, or a basin," cannot be said to be called to be one or the other without a strange misuse of words: now such is the mystical state, since it is characterized by an essential passivity in the hands of God.

Doubtless every baptized Christian possesses also the *active* potentiality to become a saint, but he has not in his own power either the *degree* of sanctity and glory to which the good pleasure of God may predestine him, or the choice of the *path* by which he is to attain it; vocation to the active or contemplative life is God's secret, and the soul is only passive in the matter.

Thus St John of the Cross says: " Every soul, according to its measure, may attain to this union, yet all do not in an equal

[1] St Thomas, *In libro De divinis nominibus*, cap. ii, lec. 4, fin.

degree, but only as our Lord shall give unto each; as it is with the blessed in heaven."[1] And St Teresa repeats that there are several paths by which to arrive there. "As I told you, it is important to understand that his Majesty does not lead all souls in the same way."[2] "You cannot," she adds, "enter all the mansions by your own power . . . unless the Lord of the castle himself admits you. Therefore I advise you to use no violence if you meet with any obstacle."[3] The reason is that "God has various ways of quenching the soul's thirst with the waters of his grace."

We grant, moreover, that the sanctifying grace conferred by baptism is the germ of the beatific vision of heaven, *semen gloriae*, but the anticipated unfolding of this germ on earth, in contemplation, can only be a privilege and not a normal way. "It would," adds St Thomas, "be even a disorder to aspire to the reward of heaven before having finished meriting it on earth."[4]

Finally, if every Christian were called to contemplation on earth by the sole fact that he received the contemplative gifts at baptism, as he then received at the same time the opposite gifts of the active life it might just as well be maintained that he is called to the active life, or that he has simultaneously all possible vocations. This would be to confound the *call* with the *possibility of the call*. We cannot speak of a call—even the most remote—till a soul has been marked, through the mercy of God, with the three classical signs indicated by St John of the Cross. Till then, it would be exceedingly imprudent for a soul to think itself "called." All false mystics have had this dangerous presumption. It must only hold itself always ready to answer God's call, *if* such be his good pleasure, by a more and more perfect life.

It is not from the lack of logic, but from an excess of logic, that the new school has been led to the prodigious theory of "*the heights of contemplation accessible to all.*" Its false starting-point is the confusion of passive or mystical with acquired contemplation, or, if you will, the postulate that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are always moved by actual grace in a uniform manner, which admits only of divers degrees of intensity

[1] *Ascent*, bk. ii, ch. iv. So St Thomas also teaches, I, q. xxiii, a. 5.
[2] *Way*, ch. xvii. [3] *Castle*, Epilogue.
[4] *Non fuisset primi hominis ordinata voluntas, si in statu meriti habere voluisset, quod ei promittebatur pro praemio* (I, q. xciv, a. 1, ad 2).

and never of different *modes*, some ordinary or common, others extraordinary or privileged. And it is on this *a priori* theory of equality that they have constructed their whole system. Thus, instead of concluding, with us, that the ordinary modes are accessible to all and necessary to sanctity, while the extraordinary modes are not so, they must logically conclude that there is only one way of approach to God, and that, as all Christians are called to sanctity, *vocati sancti*, as St Paul says, all are also called to the highest modes of contemplation: *las alturas de la contemplacion acesibiles a todos*.

Now it is the major of this reasoning which we, following Card. Billot, have energetically denied, *salva reverentia* (see Appendix VI, art. 1), and it is not only because it leads us to consequences both inadmissible and dangerous, but also because it has against it both authority and the experience of facts.

I. *Authority*.—The *ex professo* teaching of Benedict XIV, which codified the common teaching of theologians, as we have already seen (Chapter III), is clearly opposed to it, and the constant practice of the Church in processes of canonization has definitely established his thesis on this point: " The contemplative state is not necessary for sanctity: the heroic degree of the virtues is enough."

Before Benedict XIV, Fénelon had to consent (March 10, 1695), with Bossuet, to the twenty-second article of Issy: " Without these extraordinary prayers (of simple presence, surrender, quiet . . .) it is possible to become a great saint and to attain to Christian perfection."[1]

And in 1687 there had already been condemned by Innocent XI the thirty-first proposition of Molinos, which maintained that " without contemplation there can be no perfect virtue."[2] The contradictory appears to us to be at least certain, and its negation would constitute the renewal of a thesis of Molinosism or Quietism (*cf.* Bossuet, *Mystici in tuto*, nos. 41, 44, 113, 114).

[1] See the thirty-four articles discussed at the Seminary St Sulpice of Issy and signed by Bossuet, Fénelon, M. de Chalons, future Archbishop of Paris, and M. Tronson, Superior of St Sulpice—promulgated in the *Ordonnance* of April 16, 1695, at the beginning of the *Instruction on the states on prayer*, with the approbation of the Archbishop of Paris and the laudatory brief of Innocent XII to Bossuet (May 6, 1697).

[2] *Nullus meditativus veras virtutes exercet internas, quae non debent a sensibus cognosci* (the perfect virtues). *Opus est amittere virtutes* (the ordinary virtues) (31st proposition of Molinos, November 20, 1687).

We have here, then, a bad cause for which it would be vain to attempt to enlist the support of St Francis de Sales, St John of the Cross, or St Teresa, who clearly opposed it by teaching that passive contemplation is only a "short cut" full of perils, which does not claim to suppress the ordinary ways.[1] In this they but re-echoed the divine Master, who, when often asked the way to become perfect, never answered: "Be ye raised to the highest degrees of passive contemplation," but only: "Take up your cross and follow me"—that is to say, practise in a heroic degree the evangelical counsels summed up in the eight beatitudes. The passive or mystical ways are not, then, necessary for sanctity.

It is true that the authorities we have just cited are borrowed from the last three centuries, which our adversaries reject because by them they are most clearly condemned. But in the earlier centuries we should have but an embarrassment of choice in seeking for almost identical witnesses.

According to Dionysius the Carthusian, St Gregory the Great even then taught that "all are not fitted for contemplation"; that it is a "special favour of the grace of God"; and that "the people must be denied access to the holy mountain."[2]

At the beginning of the patristic era, Clement of Alexandria also declared that "all Christians are not called thereto"; that "the common faith is enough for the greater number and they should be content with it"; and that "contemplation is the privilege of those that have received from God the necessary *aptitudes* for being raised to it."[3]

Throughout the Middle Ages, from St Bernard to Gerson, the common teaching is always that all the faithful have not the mystical vocation; that it is the lot of the "privileged ones of holy Love"; that it is a grace of pre-eminent

[1] "God," says St Teresa, speaking of contemplation, "gives when, how, and to whom he wills—the goods are his, and his choice wrongs no one" (*Castle*, 4th M., ch. i).

[2] *Sine gratia* speciali, *nullus ad contemplationem contingere potest, ut dicit Gregorius* (Dionysius the Carthusian, *Opera omnia*, Tornaci, 1892, vol. 41, p. 151; *De contempl.*, bk. i, ch. xv). *Non omnes apti sunt ad contemplationem, ut dicit Gregorius, sexto Moralium* (*ibid.*, ch. xxiii, p. 161). *Populus a montis accessu prohibetur* (*ibid.*, p. 161). *Ad mysticam contemplationem Deus quos vult perducit . . . Cujus vult miseretur. . . . Cui nemo potest dicere : cur ita facis?* (*ibid.*, p. 115).

[3] *Strom.*, vi, 10 (*P.G.*, ix, 301). *Cf.* Tixeront, *Hist. du Dog.*, i, 273; Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, i, 69.

sanctification, a gratuitous anticipation of the contemplation of heaven.[1]

One single exception must be made to this moral unanimity: that of the speculative mystics who were unable to protect themselves sufficiently from the encroachments of the pantheism of the neo-Platonists, and especially that of the German school of the fourteenth century. Their famous principle is well known: *The many spring from the One and* all *human souls must return into the One through contemplation.* Whence the strict conclusion: all *souls are called to contemplation.* But who is there to-day that would dare invoke such support or accept a principle so often condemned as pantheistic, ontologistic, and naturalistic ?[2] And so, those who, in our day, desire at all price to retain the conclusion are forced to disguise its origin and to connect it, with ill-success—as we have seen—with some other equally *a priori* principle which needs to be justified by facts.

II. Having dealt with the argument from authority, we now pass to that of *experience.* Let us inquire of the directors of the most perfect communities.

1. Let us ask them, for instance, if a Carmelite monastery is the more fervent in proportion to the greater number of mystical souls in it, and the more mystical as it is the more fervent. They will answer you that that has by no means been shown, and that, on the contrary, St Teresa repeated that "[a soul] who is without it . . . will attain great perfection. It may be that she will gain far more merit, as she has to work harder on her own account" (*Way*, ch. xvii). In fact, veritable saints are there met with, who do not appear to have received any mystical gift. That is the first fact: here is another.

2. For some privileged souls mystical gifts appear from the

[1] St Bernard, *De Diversis*, sermo lxxxvii, 2. *Cf.* Pourrat, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 68; Gerson, *Theol. myst. practica*, vol. iii, pp. 399 *ff.* *Cf.* Pourrat, *ibid.*, ii, 282.

[2] See the twenty-eight propositions of Meister Eckhart condemned by John XXII (March 27, 1329) in Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, 1908, n. 501-529. See Prop. V, which condemned the neo-Platonic naturalism of the Beghards, at the Council of Vienne (1311-1312), *ibid.*, n. 475. "In the pantheistic mystics ascesis appeared to be the necessary and *sufficient* condition of ecstasy. . . . Christian mystics, on the other hand, formally vindicated the sovereign liberty of the divine initiative; for them ascesis constitutes doubtless a normally necessary condition for ecstasy, but never the sufficient condition for it" (Maréchal, *Rev. de phil.*, 1912, p. 480, vol. 21).

very beginning of their Christian life; for others only at the end, when they seem to have attained the heights of perfection; for others again, as a passing and rather rare accident. Sanctity, then, is not a function of the mystical life.

3. Many die most perfect without ever having known mystical gifts. To say that it is time that has been lacking, and that had they lived longer they would have received them, is contrary to fact as regards the old and a gratuitous statement respecting the young. It is only a subtle loophole. If God called us all to contemplation, it is in this life that he ought to give us the means thereto.

4. Facts, finally, permit us to think occasionally that such and such a non-mystical soul is more holy than another that is advanced in mysticism. Holiness and passive mysticism are not, therefore, equivalent.

To these general data obtained from observation, we might add that the psychological analysis already made (Chapter V) has shown us in the contemplative states not only differences of *degree*, intensity, or frequency, as is so wrongly insisted, but differences of *mode*, of which several are assuredly extraordinary and preternatural. Let us sum them up briefly.

1. In the ordinary ways of the spiritual life, even in active or acquired contemplation, the operations of grace always remain *unconscious* within us. They become, on the contrary, *conscious* in the four last Mansions described by St Teresa: their process is then truly extraordinary.

2. The sense of strange *novelty* on entering this new world is so vivid as to disconcert the contemplative novice and subject him to a most severe trial. This, again, is truly extraordinary. It not only, says St Thomas, supposes an infused *light* in order the better to see what was known already, but also infused *species* in order to see what is new.

3. The sense of complete *passiveness* is no less extraordinary. On feeling it St Teresa cries: " Here God does all !" and St John of the Cross: " To contemplate is to receive ! It is to receive the divine touch."

4. Finally, the experience of a *semi-transparent faith* obtained by the contemplative is still more wonderful. Having himself experienced it, St Thomas depicted his astonishment in these profound words: *Fides est inspectio divinorum in speculo et in aenigmate. Quod autem spiritualia quasi nuda veritate capiantur*, supra humanum modum est (*In III*, dist. xxxiv, q. 1, a. 2). And further on he repeats (dist. xxxv, q. 2, a. 2): *Si super-*

naturali lumine mens in tantum elevetur, ut ad ipsa spiritualia adspicienda introducatur, hoc supra humanum modum est. The mode, then, is of a higher nature, transcendental or preternatural.

It is therefore clearly shown that there are not only *degrees* of intensity or frequence, but extraordinary and preternatural *modes* in the operations of contemplative grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit. And therefore it is not according to order that these extraordinary ways should be accessible to all: *Spiritus ubi vult spirat.*

This does not mean that ordinary or acquired contemplation is not also, in a manner, *supernatural*, *infused*, and even *passive*, at least partially; but extraordinary or infused contemplation is so in a different and supereminent manner.

1. It is *supernatural*, *supra humanum modum*, not only like sanctifying grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by its *nature*, *quoad substantiam*, but also through its *mode* of operation, *quoad modum*. It is thus doubly supernatural, or supernatural *only*, as St Teresa says, or else the most supernatural, and by antonomasia, *supernaturalior et antonomastice*, as Benedict XIV, with Cardinal de Laurea, explains (*De orat. christ.*, Montrolii, 1896, p. 390).

2. We would say the same of the epithet *infused*. All graces being infused, even those of light and love, ordinary contemplation is so also, but extraordinary contemplation, by the infusion of new species and a *ready-made* love, becomes doubly so, and alone deserves, by antonomasia, the name of infused.

3. Finally, a certain *passiveness*—which is never complete[1] and never conscious—is found in every soul which acts under the impulse of grace and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But this is common to the greater part of Christian acts, such as an act of the fear of God or of contrition—perhaps even to all without exception, according to certain theologians, such as Mgr. Perriot, who have affirmed the intervention of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in all our acts of merit. This qualifying expression, *passive*, then, should be reserved, *par excellence* and by antonomasia, to that sensation of the divine in which passivity becomes *complete and manifest*, in which there is consciousness that " God does all," even though such passive-

[1] Homo sic *agitur* a Spiritu sancto, quod etiam *agit*, inquantum est liberi arbitrii; unde indiget habitu donorum (I-II, q. lxviii, a. 3, ad 2). This is the ordinary rule.

ness be essentially fleeting and itself soon become the stimulus towards vital acts even more powerful. The short *suspension* of the natural faculties, let us repeat, is not intended to suppress them, but to raise them, as with a mysterious and divine force, to their highest power.

It is in this perfectly reasonable sense that Bossuet (*Etats d'oraison*, bk. vii), St Alphonsus Liguori (*Praxis*, 127), and many other masters, have affirmed with St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and Benedict XIV, that the passive element in contemplation is not *in se* and directly meritorious, as with all other involuntary sensations, and we find that M. Saudreau has even dared to disqualify them for this fact.[1]

St Thomas gives us the theological explanation of this when he teaches that occasionally divine grace is not only *co-operative* but *operative by itself*, and that then the effect is no longer to be attributed to the soul but to God alone. As an example he gives that of the infusion of sanctifying grace in justification, *dum justificamur tota operatio pertinet ad gratiam* (I-II, q. cxi, a. 2, ad 2). Now the infusion of impressed species, in the *sensation of the divine*, is an exactly similar case. Bossuet and St Alphonsus then are covered by St Thomas against the criticism of M. Saudreau, who has wrongly understood them because he has not grasped the Thomist theory of sensation.

In thus cutting off this total passiveness, to which it suffices that we should set no obstacle, from contemplation,[2] he has suppressed an essential element, and broken, as it were, the spring of the watch. We then abandon the passive ways of mysticism to enter the active or semi-active ways of asceticism and of acquired contemplation.

Does this mean that we erect an *impassable barrier* between the two? Not at all, for there is *no hiatus* in the works of God, but continuity is conjoined with hierarchy of species. The *total* passiveness of contemplation is only a *final stage* of the *partial* passiveness which is common to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The ascetic ways are, then, a preparation for the mystical ways, IF God wills to lead us in them.

[1] Saudreau, *Les Faits extraord.*, p. 181; *La Vie d'union*, p. 564.

[2] "The soul must be lovingly intent upon God without distinctly eliciting other acts beyond those to which he inclines it . . . it must deal with him in the way of receiving" (St John of the Cross, *Living Flame*, st. 3, v. 3).

But if mysticism *is a continuation of* asceticism, are we to conclude that it is the *normal term* of perfection and of the spiritual life, and therefore that we are all called thereto ?

This new question appears to us to be ambiguous, for it may be understood in two very different senses according to the point of view. The single word *perfection* has itself two senses.

Do we speak of perfection *in itself* of the contemplative state ? Certainly, since it consists of the passive state, or of *being carried* on the wings of grace, instead of going laboriously *on foot* like the generality of mortals, the contemplative state is more perfect, as it is a higher degree of perfection to have wings than to be without them; and in this sense there is no doubt that it is at the summit of the *states* of the spiritual life. Just as the episcopate is at the summit of the sacerdotal *state* without all priests being called to or laying claim to it.

But if, on the contrary, we speak of the *individual* degree of perfection and of sanctity, it is no longer so, and may well be the reverse. *In itself* it is more meritorious to go very far and very high *on foot* than to let ourselves be carried by the *vehicle* of God's grace. The saints themselves did not cease to warn us of this, especially St Teresa, when she repeats: " She who is without [contemplation] . . . will attain great perfection. It may be that she will gain far more merit, as she has to work harder on her own account " (*Way*, xvii).

We conclude that to *go on foot* or *to be carried* in the air, not being two degrees of the same species or of the same kind, the second must not be considered as a simple *development* of the first, but rather as a *metamorphosis*, that of the worm into the butterfly, according to St Teresa (*Castle*, 5th M., ch. ii). Nevertheless, as it is more perfect to have than not to have an aerial means of locomotion, it may perhaps be said, from this new point of view, that God grants this privilege—perhaps normally ?—to those whom he judges to be too feeble to go on foot, or who would have to bear the burden of too heavy a cross,[1] provided that they put no obstacle in the way, either

[1] " As I said elsewhere, God wishes to treat us [non-contemplatives] as valiant women . . ."; contemplatives, on the contrary, need to be strengthened by him, having a heavier cross to carry (*Way*, ch. xvii). " Perhaps you wonder, then, why I treat of these favours. . . . When these joys are from God they come laden with love and strength, which aid the soul on its way and increase its good works and virtues. . . . Do not imagine that it is unimportant whether you try to obtain these graces or no; if you are not to blame, the Lord is just;

moral through their cowardice, or *physical* or *psychical* through their temperament. For, as Alvarez de Paz, in agreement with St Gregory and Dionysius the Carthusian, has so well observed, not every Christian has within him the material of a mystic, and the grace of God, in the ordinary way, does not suppress nature.

In this new sense infused contemplation might well be—if not *de jure*, at least *de facto*, and by anticipation of the heavenly metamorphosis—the term or the ordinary complement of the spiritual life on earth, in spite of exceptions of which God alone possesses the secret.

This solution appears to us less rigid and capable, without distorting them, of embracing a much greater number of facts.

1. It accounts to us for the constant intermingling of passive and active, mystical and non-mystical states among contemplatives at the same epochs of their life. If the mystical state were only a development and a maturity it would be quite impossible to strip ourselves of it and to become several times in the same day, as it were, both children and grown men. *Quando factus sum vir*, says St Paul, *evacuavi quae erant parvuli* (1 Cor. xiii 11). Whereas we can, in turns, either *go on foot* or *be carried* on mystical wings. Here there is a double way of attaining the same end: heroic degree of virtue or most perfect union with God.

2. It accounts for the comparative rarity of contemplatives without causing the suspicion of laxity and cowardice to weigh on the many admirable congregations of men and women that we have in mind who, assuredly, do not deserve so hard and unjust a reproach. We are all called to salvation; moreover it is of faith that the means of reaching it are refused to none; no one is damned save by his own fault. But if we were all called to contemplation, it would have to be granted likewise that those who do not attain thereto fail to do so of their own fault: and this too rigorous consequence cannot be upheld.

3. This solution respects the traditions of the contemplative

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what he refuses in one way, his majesty will give you in another, as he knows how; his secret ways are very mysterious, and doubtless he will do what is best for you" (*Castle*, 3rd M., ch. ii). "As I have often told you, I feel certain that these graces are sent to *strengthen our weakness* so that we may imitate [his beloved Son] by suffering much" (*ibid.*, 7th M., ch. iv). Indeed, it might be said that the mystical states are only "crutches" to help us walk.

orders which, while offering contemplation to *all*, clearly only aim at their members singled out in the first place by a special religious vocation, and only proffer them ordinary or acquired contemplation,[1] seeing that infused contemplation cannot possibly be acquired.

4. Above all it respects the teaching codified by Benedict XIV which the Church has made her own by applying to all processes of canonization this unchangeable rule: passive contemplation is neither an undeniable proof nor an inevitable reward of holiness; it is not indispensable to perfection: an heroic degree of virtue is enough; it is not an end, but a means of attaining to it. This is also the teaching of St Thomas. "Let us," he says, "give preference to the theological virtues over the passive gifts of the Holy Spirit; it is through these virtues that union with God (and therefore sanctity) is brought about."[2] Lastly, it is the teaching proclaimed by Bossuet in his words: "We conclude that it is a mistake to place merit and perfection in being active or passive."[3]

[1] Fr. Marie-Joseph, the mouthpiece of the Discalced Carmelites, thus explains the constitutions of his Order (*Études carmelitaines*, January-April, 1920, p. 17).

[2] *Virtutes theologicas praeferendas esse donis Spiritus Sancti, quia per eas* unitur *mens Deo et subjicitur illis, et sicut virtutes intellectuales praeferuntur moralibus et regulant eas, ita virtutes theologicae praeferuntur donis et regulant ea* (I-II, q. lxviii, a. 8). *Cf.* John of St Thomas (Vivès), vol. vi, p. 627; *De fructib. Spiritus Sancti*, d. 18, a. 3.

[3] *Instr. sur les états d'oraison*, II, n. 13.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

IN order to render mystical contemplation " accessible to all," our opponents have presumed to lessen it and *cut from it its transcendental* and extraordinary elements—which are its vital organs, such as total, though fleeting, passiveness under the divine touch; the totally passive and involuntary recollection of the powers; their more or less complete suspension or ligature; their new and superhuman, almost angelic, mode of operation; the experimental knowledge or *intuitive sensation* of the presence of God and of his action in our souls; and consequently the invincibly certain consciousness of a direct communication with God resulting therefrom. But it is not a practicable performance, even though it may seem to some to be a brilliant one, that has " met with perfect success," according to the usual formula.

In different guise this is also the conclusion of Fr. de Guibert, editor of the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, who writes:

" Mgr. Farges, together with Fr. Arintero, appears to me to have firmly established his contention against M. Saudreau that it is possible to have an ' angelic ' knowledge of God, intermediate between pure faith and the beatific vision; one that is direct, experimental, though as yet obscure, and that *in fact* certain descriptions of mystical states imply in those that have experienced them such a knowledge " (July, 1921, p. 296).[1]

And as these passive and transcendental psychological elements are certainly not found in all contemplation, their essential distinction and division into ordinary and extraordinary or acquired and infused contemplation, or the *duality of the ways*, active or passive, is thus found to be once more shown.

[1] It should be remarked that this judgement of Fr. de Guibert was delivered after having read the copious defence of M. Saudreau with which he ends the new edition (1921) of *l'État mystique*, pp. 301 to 372 (Engl. ed., *The Mystical State*, pp. 179-198). The case has then been heard. Fr. de Guibert adds: " Mgr. Farges has the merit of having given a clear, concise, methodical and precise account of a solution which I am aware appears to many to be definitely discarded, but against which in reality no truly decisive and indisputable argument seems to have been brought to bear." It would be hard to disown M. Saudreau's thesis more politely.

For if in extraordinary or infused contemplation we respect the marvellous completeness of its transcendental elements, so well described by St Teresa in the four last *Moradas*, it is obvious that such a contemplation is not "accessible to all," but only to chosen souls whom God transports thither, for his divine Spirit is free and "bloweth where it listeth."

In this case what are the duties of the director? Let us allow an eminent Master of theology, Mgr. Chollet, an old and distinguished professor, now Bishop of Cambrai, to reply. This is what he writes to us:

"DEAR AND REVEREND MONSIGNOR,

"I hasten to congratulate you on having so well dismissed the so-called 'Salesian School' of the 'Way' or of 'Semi-quietism.' This School always has its adepts. . . .

"Furthermore, I am entirely at one with you as regards the attitude which directors may or should take when required to deal with the passive ways and the prayer of quiet. The passive ways are opened by God himself to whom it pleases him. He leads some imperfect souls in them that they may be sanctified; some saints he does not so lead. Let us leave to him the ruling of these ways without forcing souls therein. Let us rest content with observing what takes place there."

Such, summed up in a masterly manner, is the morally unanimous tradition of the last three centuries, which we have no right to cut off and separate from the whole tradition—the Spirit of God never having been withdrawn from his Church in any century, and never having ceased to direct the progress of Catholic thought during the inevitable crises which are a part of human liberty.

Let us, in conclusion, make clear the position which we have adopted, in common with St Thomas, St Teresa, St John of the Cross, Benedict XIV, and *entire* tradition, on the fundamental question of the *duality of the ways*.

There are on this earth two kinds of contemplation of God, or simple intuition without reasoning, *simplex intuitus*—not counting that of St Paul, which, according to St Thomas, was a vision of the very *essence* of God, though inferior to that of the blessed, transitory and very rare.

The one is produced *passively through a divine touch or infused species;* the other *actively* and *without infused species.* This is a general division, very clear and precise, and one perfectly able to be verified. The infused species are recognized by the entirely passive appearance of a wholly or at least partially new object, which has not been discovered by our own effort. It is this that produces the *sensation*, or concrete and experimental knowledge of the *divine.* (A sensation without *impressed species* would be as contradictory an idea as a triangle with no angles.)

The *first* is known *par excellence* as passive infused contemplation, more or less analogous with that of the angels. It consists in a certain ineffable touch, or obscure vision of God, apprehended by the consciousness, not in his *essence*, but in his *action* in our souls or in the imprint (*impressed species*) which this action impresses on them. Thus it is extraordinary, and no one can lay claim to it. It may be divided into contemplation by species humanly intelligible (with sensible images), or by superhuman and more strictly angelic species (without sensible images). It may, again, be subdivided into obscure and negative contemplation (the *divine darkness*) and more or less distinct and positive contemplation.

The *second* contemplation of God, without infused species, is produced through concepts of reason and faith normally abstracted from sensible things. It is then ordinary, active, or acquired by human effort, assisted by grace and the enlightenment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Between the two—the ways of God being of infinite richness and variety—we have admitted an imperfect mixed contemplation as an intermediary or *bridge.*[1] In this there is no new infused species, but a supernatural combination of two pre-existing species whence springs a new and very striking idea. Like the preceding, it is a contemplation by normal species, but it ascends until arrested on the threshold of the passive or mystical ways—that is to say, of the four last *Moradas* of St Teresa.

The great exaggeration—and the most dangerous—of the Quietists of every century, is to confuse these two ways: the one active and ordinary or ascetic, in which the soul must make an effort to attain the end "*at all costs*"; the other passive and extraordinary or mystical, into which God alone can lead us. Here human effort is vain: it is the garden enclosed, *hortus*

[1] *Cf.* pp. 83 *ff.*

conclusus. The soul must "*leave God to act*," for God asks from it only docility, and that it put no obstacle in the way of his action. To desire—as is claimed—to force souls into these passive or mystical ways in the same manner in which they are urged nowadays to frequent communion, is a mistake and foolishness. It is to ape mysticism and to discredit it by raising up false mystics and illuminati. Experience has only too often shown it, throughout the centuries and until our own days.

PART II

ACCIDENTAL OR MARVELLOUS MYSTICAL PHENOMENA AND THEIR NATURAL AND DIABOLICAL COUNTERFEITS

Foreword

WE have so far studied the central and *essential* phenomenon of mystical life—that is to say, the direct and conscious union of the soul with God through contemplation or contemplative prayer understood in the strictest sense.

We explained first of all its general nature, which is that of being infused and passive, for it does not depend on ourselves to bring about, even in the smallest degree, any of the effects which it alone produces within us. We then defined it, with the Carmelite Congress, as a *knowledge*, not abstract but *experimental*, or a spiritual sensation of divine things produced supernaturally in the soul by God. It is then fundamentally constituted by a true *objective sensation* or an *immediate apprehension* by our consciousness of the *presence of God*, while his essence remains inaccessible to us. Now this is not a natural mode of knowledge for the human understanding, but a higher infused mode, comparable to that of the angels.

We afterwards studied the different stages, so varied in form, through which the contemplative soul passes in its ascent towards God and its more and more perfect union with the divinity. Finally, retracing our steps, we endeavoured to understand the prior trials, likewise passive, or purifications of the senses and spirit, by which the soul is gradually prepared to become more pure, more generous, and less unworthy of the sublime state of contemplation.

But all this is as yet but half our task. It remains for us still to study the *accidental* phenomena of the mystical life, by which we mean those *marvellous phenomena* that, without being confused with contemplation, often accompany it in different degrees, for its outward manifestation.

This does not mean that mystical contemplation is not already in itself something very wonderful. Knowledge through

infused species and without abstraction, producing an intuitive and conscious sensation of the presence of God or of some supernatural reality, is itself a marvel of the first order, essentially above the natural order and even above the ordinary ways of grace, which commonly labours unconsciously in our souls. But to this inward marvel, which is not an accidental miracle but a superior and constant order of the supernatural life—that of the mystical life—are added many others, accidental or complementary, which are, as it were, its external radiation, above all for the edification of the faithful, and considerably modify the physical and physiological life of the saints, as experience shows. They are all miraculous.

Such, for example, are the visions, hearing of supernatural words, personal revelations and prophecies, the curious phenomena of second sight and telepathy, infused aptitude for science or art, the marvellous accompaniments to ecstasy, such as stigmata, radiance of the body, levitation, bilocation, freedom from physical needs such as food and drink, power over animals and the elements of nature, healings and other miracles of the mystical thaumaturges.

This enumeration alone, although far from complete, suffices to enable the reader to perceive a whole world of marvels which, without being essential to mystical sanctity, are, however, closely bound up with it, and on the other hand, on account of their clearly supernatural character, are a stumbling-block to rationalists and *unbelievers*. Their newspapers, their reviews, their controversial writings, their popular lectures, and even their scientific clinical conferences, are the daily battle-fields on which all miraculous phenomena are attacked, either by denying their authenticity, if it lends itself to the least possibility of doubt, or, when the facts are not to be denied, by attacking their supernatural character. For them this is a foregone conclusion, obstinately held. Instead of fairly examining the facts clearly established, it is a shorter method to deny them *a priori*, and to repeat confidently: The miraculous is impossible, therefore it does not exist!

This state of mind is unscientific in the highest degree; so much so that it would be waste of time for us to refute it, both because such a refutation belongs to the province of the most elementary philosophy, and also because it is useless to reason with those that are sick, if these deniers of the power of God are sincere; still more so if they are wilfully blind. In accordance with the famous words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

" It would do them too great an honour to punish them, it is enough to put them away."[1]

We address ourselves, then, only to readers who are sufficiently enlightened and sufficiently straightforward to acknowledge the possibility of the miraculous—that is to say, of the intervention in the events of this world of preternatural causes, such as good or evil spirits, and of God himself; for, according to the magnificent words of St Thomas, the first and most mysterious of all occult forces is that which we call God: *Causa autem simpliciter occulta omni homini est Deus*.[2]

Diametrically opposed to such prejudiced unbelievers are to be found those *over-credulous* folk who are inclined to see the devil everywhere, or the " finger of God " in all extraordinary events. A good director will avoid these two excesses. He will never admit marvellous facts without proof, and will, before believing them, require convincing evidence; but once, after critical examination, these facts are made certain, once their extranatural character is well established, he will recall to mind that the power of God infinitely surpasses all that we can imagine, and, far from being astonished at the wonders thus met with, he will avow that to the Almighty still greater are possible. Far from being scandalized, then, he will admire in silence and " let truth prevail." Such is the wise counsel of St Teresa:

" People may say," she writes, " such things appear impossible, and it is best not to scandalize the weak in faith by speaking about them. But it is better that the latter should disbelieve us, than that we should desist from enlightening souls which receive these graces, that they may rejoice and may endeavour to love God better for his favours, seeing he is so mighty and so great. There is no danger here of shocking those for whom I write by treating of such matters, for they know and believe that God gives even greater proofs of his love. I am certain that if any one of you doubts the truth of this, God will never allow her to learn it by experience, for he desires that no limits should be set to his work: therefore, never discredit them because you are not thus led yourselves."[3]

The Saint, moreover, constantly returns to this great principle: " God's immensity has no limits, neither have his works;

[1] 3e *Lettre de la Montagne*.
[2] *Contra gent.*, bk. III, c. ci; *Sum. theol.*, I, q. cv, a. 7.
[3] *Castle*, 1st M., ch. i.

. . . so do not be amazed at what I write about them, which is but a cipher of what remains untold concerning God."[1]

In order either to sustain the struggle with unbelievers or to hold discussion with those who are too credulous or who, in spite of their intelligence and good faith, are the victims of certain illusions, the Christian apologist, above all if he be also a director of souls, needs to be armed from head to foot, and, whilst in no way despising medieval armour, he should become versed in the use of the much more powerful and effective weapons which modern science is able to offer him. He should, above all, learn how to contend with unbelievers with their own scientific weapons—the only ones which they admit to be of value—and to warn over-credulous minds against their own illusions.

Such is the end in view in this second part, marking its essential difference from the first part of this study. So far, all the mystical phenomena which we have analysed throughout the stages of contemplation or of progressive union of the soul with God, take place almost entirely in the inward consciousness, in that invisible sanctuary to which the scholar has no access and with which he does not even concern himself; we have not, then, as yet had occasion to face his attacks. Here, on the contrary, we shall no longer study the intimate soul of the saints, but the outward radiance of their sanctity in the domain of nature, and as it often produces there marvellous phenomena contrary to that natural order which is studied by scholars, we are sure to come in contact with their astonishment and with their objections.

Before entering upon this struggle, we would point out that in our first part we have, in military language, firmly *secured our base*, and that mystical sanctity, thus clearly distinguished from the marvellous phenomena which are often added to it as its complement, remains sheltered and beyond the attacks of scholars. So that if we find ourselves honourably obliged to make some concessions of detail and to concede to them this or that fact formerly reputed in error to be miraculous, we shall do so without harm, or danger to the sanctity of our saints.

Should we grant them, for instance, that such and such a saint might have been hysterical and that such and such an extraordinary detail in his life could be explained as being due to

[1] *Castle*, 7th M., ch. i.

this nervous malady, that would not interfere with his sanctity, which is not incompatible with any malady, and would in no way diminish the other marvellous facts of his life. In other respects we shall easily be able to uphold the great majority of these facts—that is to say, a thousand more wonders than are necessary in order to demonstrate to all sincere minds the magnificent outward reflection of their inward sanctity.

As these marvellous phenomena are innumerable, in order to study them methodically we shall divide them into three groups, according to whether they are of the *cognitive*, *affective*, or *physical* order, and we will begin with the first, without stopping to justify a classification that has no other claim than that of convenience and clearness.

This plan will give sufficient scope to include, when necessary, all the counterfeits of hypnotism, of spiritism, of occultism, or of diabolism, without, however, entering, *ex professo*, on the study of diabolical mysticism, which would alone demand one or several volumes, and is intentionally omitted.

CHAPTER I

MARVELLOUS PHENOMENA OF THE COGNITIVE ORDER

GOD—according to the noble expression of the Greek language—is the *Seer par excellence*, ὁ Θεός, both because, being a pure spirit, his essential action is to see himself and understand himself, to be the thought of all thought—ἡ νοήσεως νόησις—and also because, being Creator of all that is, has been, or is to be, he must know all in himself: present, past, and to come.

The first effect of mystical union and of that likeness of a soul with God which results from it, and also its first reward, is to make of that soul a seer.

Holy Writ has repeated this in a thousand forms: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God," and in God they will see all creation. Doubtless this text refers above all to the beatitude of heaven, but as the mystical state is an anticipation, and, as it were, a foretaste of this on earth, it is on this account a beginning of participation in this blessed vision.

Divine visions, then, are possible and real, but the study of them, both experimental and theoretical, which entails a considerably extensive historical and scientific knowledge as well as great philosophical and theological judgement, cannot fail to be very difficult and extremely complex. Happily the attractiveness of the subject has become so fascinating as largely to compensate us for our trouble. Let us hope our readers will feel the same attraction and have the courage to follow us to the end.

Division of the subject.—With the purpose of guiding them in an orderly manner through the labyrinth of this vast area, we shall treat—after a short preliminary section on visions *in general*—of *outward* visions; of *inward* visions, both *imaginative* and *intellectual*, and of supernatural *locutions*. The three articles which follow will be devoted to the important question of their *hallucinatory counterfeits*, single or collective; then will come those mysterious questions concerning supernatural *dreams;* vision *through opaque bodies; telepathy* and *second sight;* and finally, that of infused *knowledge*.

Our chief solicitude, in each of these studies, will be to distinguish with care, in every fact, between the natural and supernatural, the divine and diabolical elements.

§ 1

Concerning visions in general

True visions are rare, but visionaries are legion, and this simple statement is enough to show the usefulness of this study. If all well-educated Christians ought to be enlightened on this subject, this is absolutely indispensable for apologists whose mission it is to defend the faith and for spiritual directors who have charge of souls. Both ought to know how to protect themselves against systematic denials and to be on their guard against the no less formidable dangers of a naive credulity.

In this short preliminary section we shall first of all explain the nature of visions in general, their many kinds, their relative excellence, and finally the precautionary attitude to be maintained before any examination, when in doubt as to whether they are true or false, divine or diabolical.

The word *vision*, as St Thomas has pointed out, may be understood in *two senses:* that which it has in its first acceptation, and that which custom has given it. In the first sense it signifies perception through the organ of sight. But because of the nobility and certainty of this sense custom makes use of the word by extension to express intellectual perception, and even the inward senses, such as the conscience and imagination. In this sense Holy Writ speaks commonly of the vision of God reserved for the clean of heart.[1]

We are then able to *define* vision in the mystical sense as: " The outward or inward supernatural perception of any object naturally invisible to man."

It is a supernatural or miraculous perception, for, as the definition implies, it concerns the seeing of things which are

[1] *De aliquo nomine dupliciter convenit loqui: uno modo secundum primam ejus impositionem ; alio modo, secundum usum nominis. Sicut patet in nomine visionis, quod primo impositum est ad significandum actum sensus visus, sed propter dignitatem et certitudinem hujus sensus, extensum est hoc nomen secundum usum loquentium ad omnem cognitionem aliorum sensuum. . . . Et ulterius ad cognitionem intellectus, secundum illud S Matthei, v.* 8, " *Beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt* " (*Sum. theol.*, I, q. lxvii, a. 1).

invisible to us according to the very laws of nature. Thus, not only God, but our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, the holy angels, the saints in glory, or again the souls in purgatory may be the objects of a vision.

It matters little whether these objects be *essentially* invisible to us, as in the cases that we have just cited, or only *accidentally* so. Thus there might be a vision of someone corporal and visible, but at the time absent and accidentally invisible. Such was the case of St Paul's vision of Ananias at Damascus, or that of Mère Agnès de Langeac by M. Olier.

The vision of God or of a pure spirit is *above* human nature, whilst that of a person absent is only *contrary* to the laws of nature. In either case, for different motives, the natural law is broken or suspended, and there is miraculous perception or vision properly so-called.

Our definition adds that such a perception may be either inward or outward, and at this point begins the distinction between the different *kinds of visions*. If the object is seen outwardly, it is an *external* or corporal vision, working through the organ of sight; if inward, we have a purely *intellectual* or spiritual, or else an *imaginative* vision, according as to whether it is produced by the intelligence or by the imagination. The latter must not be confused with a vain imagination, which implies something fantastic and unreal: this kind of vision has, on the contrary, a very real object, but it is expressed by a simple image.

Here are a few *examples* in order to make these three ideas more clear:

The appearance of our Lord to his apostles, after his resurrection, or to St Paul, after his ascension, or again that of the Immaculate Virgin at Lourdes, were outward or corporal visions, to which the word *apparition* may more fittingly be applied, for it expresses an outward reality, visible or tangible, which is perceived by our senses, and not merely an image or an idea of the mind. The real presence of an object and its mental representation are so essentially different that vision and apparition ought never to be confused, as is so often done. Vision is a genus; apparition a species which tells us much more than a simple vision.

On the contrary, the scenes in the Apocalypse, contemplated and described by St John, the seer of Patmos; the dream of Joseph, the son of Jacob, or that of Pharao, and so forth, were only imaginative visions.

Finally—as was the case with St Teresa and several mystical saints—when the mind is supernaturally enlightened, without sensible images, as to some fact naturally invisible, such as the presence of God, of which the soul is clearly conscious, or again of the Holy Trinity, of whom these saints believed that they had a more or less clear vision; when the mind is enlightened by truths naturally inaccessible, such as the explanation of mysteries, the foresight of events to come, including contingent future things, then the vision is said to be purely intellectual.

Nevertheless, these three kinds of visions, far from being mutually exclusive, may occasionally be reunited in one single complex vision characterized and described by its dominant note. Let us give some examples:

The vision of the star by the Magi was both external and intellectual. External, for they followed its progress, disappearance, and reappearance; intellectual, for they understood its hidden meaning.

The vision of Ananias by St Paul was imaginative and intellectual. So also was that of St Peter when he saw in heaven a great linen sheet in which were beasts both clean and unclean. It is clear that this sheet was only an image, the symbolical sense of which was at the same time revealed to him.

An example of the three kinds of vision united together seems more rare; there is, however, one that is suggested by St Augustine. It is the biblical vision of Balthazar, when he saw the mysterious hand writing on the wall: *Mane, Thecel, Phares.*[1] At the sight of this the king fixed the image of it in his mind, and later understood its fatal meaning.[2] But, with all respect to so great a doctor, we venture to think that a better example might have been chosen. The sight of the unknown hand is certainly an outward vision, but the image of this vision stamping itself on the mind is only a natural act of the imagination, and not a new imaginative vision. Finally, in understanding the explanation of the prophet Daniel, the impious king only performed a natural act of the intelligence. If there was any intellectual vision, it was only in the mind of Daniel and not in that of Balthazar.

The instance cited, then, is not a happy one. This does not mean, however, that, though rare, an instance cannot be found. Thus it might be granted that Saul, on the way to Damascus,

[1] *Daniel* v 25.

[2] St Aug., *De Genesi ad litteram*, bk. xii, c. xii, n. 24.

had at the one time a triple vision: *outward*, when he saw the heavenly light which blinded him, or contemplated in spirit our Lord appearing and speaking to him; *imaginative*, when he saw the features of Ananias, whom the Lord sent to lay hands on him; finally, *intellectual*, for he understood the will of God in his regard, which was a revelation to his intelligence.[1]

A certain number of mystical writers, after having explained these three kinds of visions, have striven to make a comparison between them in order to show their value or *relative perfection*. Some have endeavoured to discover an actual gradation, looking on intellectual vision as higher than imaginative, and the latter higher than outward vision. But we have not been able to grasp the grounds for such subtle distinctions.

Still less dare we restrict, as has been done, outward apparitions to those souls that are less perfect in the mystical life. On the contrary, we see a great number of saints enjoying these favours, whom we should not class among less perfect souls. Such were St Peter, St John, St Joseph, Zacharias, and the Blessed Virgin herself.

It is true that, by way of exception, God has also granted visions to sinners whom he wished either to convert or to punish: such as Balthazar of whom we have just spoken, Heliodorus, Balaam, Saul before his conversion. But between this and the conclusion that such visions are for the imperfect, lies a chasm which cannot be bridged.

We would say much the same with regard to imaginative visions. We find them granted by God to the most famous mystical saints, even at the zenith of their sanctity—for instance, to St John, St Peter, St Paul, St Joseph. And their frequency even surprises us in the lives of St Teresa, St Bridget, St Gertrude, St Margaret Mary, and many others whom our readers will doubtless be able to call to mind.

We would only grant that intellectual visions, giving understanding of the highest mysteries, notably the vision of the Holy Trinity, are the usual lot of the most perfect. But we do not see why God should not grant—at least in a transient way—these fugitive intuitions to less perfect souls in order to stimulate them in their ascension towards him. We have no right thus to limit the power and the goodness of God, and there is no fact that authorizes us to think that he never exercises it in this way with regard to certain souls.

From all the more or less ingenious comparisons in which

[1] *Acts* ix.

mystical writers of divers schools have indulged, we select only the following *three conclusions*, which seem to us to be principles for direction that are beyond dispute.

1. No visions are essential to sanctity. It is possible to become a saint without them. Also it is possible to question, with respect, such and such a vision of such and such a saint, without in any wise criticizing his sanctity. If visions were a certain sign of sanctity, Balaam and his ass—according to the humorous remark of St Bonaventure—ought to have been suggested for canonization, for they both had the vision of the angel. We must not then be in a hurry to see a proof of remarkable virtue in any particular vision, but rather judge the visions by the virtue.

And if they are only to be met with in the usual way among saints, exceptions to the contrary are not impossible, as history shows. Among sinners, however, visions are always very rare, and therefore must always seem suspect and attributable to illusion or to the devil, until there is proof to the contrary. And among the saints themselves, they should never be accepted without serious examination.

2. All real visions, outward, imaginative, or intellectual, are truly signal graces. As there is no absolutely strict classification in the order of perfection in these three kinds, it is better to judge of this from the more or less perfect nature of the object revealed, or from the dignity of the person who appears.

Thus the vision of the Holy Trinity is much more perfect than that of our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, or of the saints; and the revelation of the more lofty mysteries is superior to supernatural enlightenments that are less profound.

3. These criteria will allow us to understand why it is that intellectual visions are reputed to be the more perfect, because their object is usually more sublime. This is why—especially when they are frequent or habitual—they are reserved for the most perfect, but never to the exclusion of either imaginative or exterior visions.

These preliminary remarks on visions in general, although incomplete, will, we believe, be found fully sufficient for the understanding of each of their kinds. Let us hasten to pass on to the much more important and more intricate study of them, for each of them has special difficulties of its own.

§ 2

External visions

Definition.—This kind of vision is the perception of some naturally invisible external object, by means of the natural organ of sight. Thus the marvellous in these visions consists in the actual apparition of the object, and not in its perception, which takes place in accordance with the normal laws of sight.

Such, for instance, was the apparition of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, to his apostles gathered together in the Cenacle. "See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have."[1]

It is not, however, necessary that the object which appears should be corporal or with "flesh and bones," as on that occasion; even though it should be nothing but a phantom pure and simple—that is to say, a sensible or luminous form without a material body—it is enough that it should be external to the one by whom it is contemplated, and occupy definite space either in front or to the right or left of him. This is why, unlike some writers, we have called these visions not *corporal*, but only *external*.

Thus, whether the Immaculate Virgin appearing to Bernadette in the grotto at Lourdes had a material and living body, or only the objective and luminous appearances thereof, does not much matter; the vision still remains external.

There are, then, two things to be ascertained in this kind of vision: first of all, the *fact* of the apparition of a real and external object; then the *character* of this fact—that is, whether it be natural or supernatural, divine or diabolical.

The *fact*, like all other facts, is its own proof, and there is nothing in its supernatural character to prevent it from being observed and handled like all other facts of history. Historical criticism here claims all its rights if the fact be past, and if still present, the ordinary principles of physics and physiology are sufficient to prove it.

For instance, if the object ceases to be visible as soon as the eyes are shut, its objective reality cannot be disputed. So also if it is stationary and does not shift with the motions of the eyes or head, as would be the case with a purely imaginary object, which would alter its position with these motions. In the same way if all those present see the same object as we,

[1] *Luc.* xxiv 39.

or at least—if among those present only a certain number see it—if these are all affected in the same way. This again is a sure indication that the vision is really objective and in no way subjective or variable with the imagination and temperament of each one.

If there be but one who sees it, the two first tests, which are enough in the ordinary matters of life, may be checked in addition by that of touch, if the object seen is tangible, as our risen Lord invited his apostles, when they were doubtful: *Videte et palpate.*

When there are only one or a few among those present who see the vision, it is because the apparition wishes to be seen by them alone, and not at all because some have keener sight or some special preparation denied to the others.

It is then quite wrong to say with Lasserre, with reference to the apparition at Lourdes: "The sight of the other children was not, like that of Bernadette, miraculously freed from the *veils of the flesh*, which hinder the *seeing of spiritualized bodies*." Here there is a double mistake, firstly because a "spiritualized" body—if there can be said, strictly speaking, to be such a thing—would be impalpable and invisible; and again because the organ of sight, if "spiritualized" or "freed from the veils of the flesh," would no longer be able to see anything here below.

So much for metaphors, poetic possibly, but certainly inexact. Let us repeat once again that all the marvel consists, not in the act of seeing, which takes place in conformity with the natural laws of vision, but in the apparition of an object naturally invisible.[1]

The true difficulty consists in telling whether the vision be only hallucinatory, but, as we shall shortly deal at length with the question of both individual and collective hallucination, we rest content here with observing that the fear of hallucination is not a difficulty that is confined to supernatural visions, but belongs to all natural visions.

Unless there be some certain means of distinguishing them, we should sink into the depths of historical scepticism, and even into universal scepticism, for it would never be possible to declare that such and such an object has been seen with

[1] Cf. *St Thomas*, Suppl. q. lxxxv, a. 2 and 3. "The clearness of a glorified body may be seen naturally by the eye of one who is not glorified. . . . It belongs to the essence of light to be able to act on the sight."

the eyes or touched with the hand without incurring the suspicion of having been deluded.

The objection, then, is no more formidable for visions said to be supernatural than for natural vision. A fact sufficiently guaranteed by the observation of the senses of sight or touch remains a fact, whatever be its explanation, natural or supernatural.

Now for the second point. The reality of the object seen once clearly established, it remains for us to examine its *character*, natural or supernatural, diabolical or divine. Now this is a more difficult matter than that of showing that a fact is a fact.

First, the *supernatural* character. In some cases it is clearly evident. Thus the apparition of a body risen from the dead, like that of our Lord when he appeared, the doors being shut, in the Cenacle, is naturally impossible. The apparition of the Cross or the Labarum in the air, in full view of the whole army of Constantine, is, the fact once proved, again not of the natural order. In the same way the apparition of the Venerable Mère Agnès de Langeac to M. Olier, two hundred leagues away, is evidently not a natural fact.

At other times, on the contrary, the evidence of the supernatural character is not so striking and requires to be examined. The Magi, when they saw the star, had to inquire as to whether it were indeed the star foretold by Jacob. The apparition of the Virgin, whether at La Salette, Lourdes, or Pontmain, became the object of long scientific, medical and canonical study before the Church pronounced judgement.

In order to proceed regularly, the commissions of inquiry first examined the hypotheses of trickery and hallucination; having discarded these, they then examined at length the diabolical hypothesis before arriving at a conclusion as to divine intervention.

The signs of diabolical intervention are well known. The devil's deeds always carry with them at least some ridiculous, unseemly, or coarse details; or even something opposed to faith or morals. If his vices were too obvious his influence would soon be unmasked; they are therefore almost always disguised under more or less inoffensive appearances, even under deceitful traits of virtue and sanctity. He transforms himself at will into an angel of light. God occasionally even allows him to assume the most majestic forms, such as those of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or the saints. Nevertheless—for

God could not otherwise permit it—the disguise, no matter how bold, is never complete, and he always betrays himself in some particular which cannot escape an attentive and prudent observer.

Furthermore, the work of the devil becomes very soon unmasked by evil results, for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

Should this examination call for some delay, and the director still hesitate in pronouncing for or against the divine character of the apparition, after admitting it to be a fact, what ought to be done *while awaiting a decision?*

St Teresa's opinion, the one generally adopted, is that we must render to the image that is the object of the apparition the honour due to it, even though there may be room for fear that its author is the devil. So, to the image of Jesus Christ, adoration; to that of the Blessed Virgin or the saints, the homage which belongs to them. And for the following very good reason:

"However wicked an artist may be," writes St Teresa, "we should reverence his picture if it represents Him who is our only good. . . . A great theologian once said that he should not trouble himself though the devil, who is a clever painter, should present before his eyes the living image of Christ, which would only kindle his devotion and defeat the evil one with his own weapons."[1]

In fact, this homage being addressed to the person represented and not to the author of the portrait, statue, or representation, there would be no intention of honouring the devil. Nevertheless, St Thomas, in order to avoid all ambiguity and every risk of the devil taking this homage to himself, insists that it be given under the express condition that such a representation is not a mask beneath which he is hidden.[2]

Another reserve might also be made if the fact, instead of being private, were of a public nature and an occasion of scandal or disorder. Thus we have in our own time seen bishops very prudently forbidding the public access to certain statues of the Blessed Virgin, said to be miraculous, which, in themselves, were very venerable.

But if in principle, at least under certain conditions, we should give honour to the holy persons who are the objects of an apparition, even when in doubt as to whether the devil is the author, all the more is it forbidden to despise or outrage

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. ix. [2] *In III Sent.*, dist. ix, q. i, a. 2.

them, and St Teresa severely censures certain inexperienced directors who had advised her to do so.

" This great scholar," she adds in the same passage, " held that it was very wrong to advise anyone who saw a vision of our Lord to offer it signs of scorn. . . . Although I have written about this elsewhere, I am glad of the opportunity of saying it now, for I know someone [herself] who was deeply pained at being bidden to behave in this way. I know not who can have invented such a torture for one who felt bound to obey the counsel given by her confessor, for she would have thought her soul was at stake had she disobeyed him. My advice is, if you are given such an order, that, humbly alleging the reasons I have set before you to your confessor, you should not carry it out."[1]

Nevertheless, it seems to us that we should not disapprove of certain practices, not in themselves lacking in reverence, such as sprinkling the apparition with holy water or asking it to show a sign of its truth, which are but a test to enable us to solve a difficult problem.

But once it is proved that the apparition is diabolical and that it is indeed the devil that appears under the mask of the most holy persons, the course to be followed is very different: not only should we abstain from every act of veneration, but repel the devil and his deceitful mask with indignation and contempt.

St Philip Neri recommended spitting on these lying apparitions, and this method was entirely successful in his case in putting them to flight.

§ 3

Imaginative visions

Whilst the outward vision requires a sensible outside object with its effect on our eyes, the imaginative vision is produced wholly within the soul, in the imagination, and is in no wise localized or outwardly projected.

Mystics *define* it thus: it is a sensible representation, produced, either when awake or asleep, in the imagination by God. They also state that imaginative visions are by far the most numerous in the lives of the saints. Hence the importance of studying them in order to distinguish those which come from nature itself or from the freaks of the imagination, and those which are from God or from the devil.

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. ix.

First of all, in order to establish the natural or supernatural character of an image we must *examine:* (1) its beginning and the time it lasts; (2) its nature or its object; (3) its clearness or its obscurity; (4) finally, its effects on the soul of the seer. If certain of these aspects obviously surpass the natural powers of the mind, its supernatural origin will be clearly established. Nor is it at all impossible to arrive at such a proof.

1. The *beginning* and *duration* of the natural image are more or less dependent on our will. They are the product of our labour or the spontaneous fruit of our state of mind, of our hope or our fear; also we may very often by voluntary effort modify the image, cause it to disappear, or prolong it with greater or less intensity.

The supernatural image, on the contrary, appears suddenly, without preparation or presentiment; it disappears in the same way, no matter what effort we may make to prolong it; in a word, it is entirely independent of our will. This also is what happens in outward visions. It does not depend on ourselves to see them appear or disappear, any more than it does to change their shape or colour, whereas the creations of the artist, the poet, or the musician, are changed and prolonged more or less at their will.

2. The *nature* of the natural image or of its object is never beyond the compass of the mind of the individual. When some unlettered peasant, who has never left her native village, like Anne Catherine Emmerich, sees in imagination the travels of the Saviour through Palestine and describes its geography with exactitude, with its rivers, its mountains, its forests, and its towns, with their inhabitants, their costume, their manners and customs, all these images are evidently transcendental and supernatural.

To this relative transcendence is occasionally added a transcendence which may be called absolute and beyond every human mind, as, for example, in the case of the visions of our Lord by St Teresa.

On one occasion, the Saint writes, "there stood before me the most sacred Humanity, as painters represent him after the resurrection, in great beauty and majesty. . . . If I were to spend many years in devising how to picture to myself anything so beautiful, I should never be able, nor even know how, to do it; for it is beyond the reach of any possible imagination here below; the whiteness and brilliancy alone are inconceivable. It is not a brilliancy which dazzles, but a delicate whiteness and

a brilliancy infused, furnishing the most excessive light to the eyes, never wearied thereby, nor by the visible brightness which enables us to see a beauty so divine. It is a light so different from any light here below that the very brightness of the sun we see, in comparison with the brightness and light before our eyes, seems to be something so obscure, that no one would ever wish to open his eyes again. It is like most pellucid water running in a bed of crystal, reflecting the rays of the sun, compared with most muddy water on a cloudy day, flowing on the surface of the earth . . . this light seems to be natural, and in comparison with it, every other light is something artificial. . . . So exceedingly great is the power of this vision . . . that it is impossible, in my opinion, for any soul to endure it, if our Lord did not succour it in a most supernatural way, by throwing it into a trance or ecstasy, whereby the vision of the divine presence is lost in the fruition thereof."[1]

3. The *clearness* of a natural image may vary with an effort of will and the attention given to this or that detail. It is not so with a supernatural image. Its clearness always remains the same, according to the design of God, and if he wish to hide from us certain details—such, for instance, as those of pure curiosity—every effort and all our labour are quite useless to discover them.

This is what St Teresa experienced in one of her visions of our Lord. " Though I saw him speaking to me," she says, " and though I was contemplating his great beauty, and the sweetness with which those words of his came forth from his divine mouth,—and though I was extremely desirous to behold the colour of his eyes, or his stature, so that I might be able to describe them, yet I never attained to the sight of them, and I could do nothing for that end: on the contrary, I lost the vision altogether."[2]

It is obvious that such a vision as this could not be the work of the imagination, as St Teresa herself observes, for if the imagination had been able to produce the other traits of the divine face it would also have been able to imagine the eyes. Yet neither one nor the other was within her power.

4. Finally, the *effects* of the supernatural image are again very different. Natural memories, even those that leave the greatest impression, sooner or later become effaced; supernatural visions are unforgettable, except during the time of mystical trials. " There remains," adds St Teresa, " so deep

[1] *Life*, ch. xxviii. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. xxix.

an impression of the majesty and beauty of God, that it is impossible to forget it, except when our Lord is pleased that the soul should suffer from aridity and desolation, of which I shall speak hereafter; for then it seems to forget God himself."[1]

Nevertheless, it is not enough to distinguish supernatural imaginative visions from the natural products of the imagination; we must also be able to distinguish them from *diabolical visions*, for it is certain that the wicked angel can, at will, in so far as God allows, produce fantastic scenes in our minds which come from his suggestion.

"The good or the wicked angel," says St Thomas, "can, by virtue of his nature, move the imagination of man. In fact, we have stated that corporal nature may be moved locally by an angel; consequently all the effects which flow from local movement may be produced by an angel. Now, imaginary apparitions are manifestly produced in us at times by the local motion of animal spirits and moods. . . . In the same way, then, that this effect is the result of the natural motion produced by moods, or sometimes even by man's will, who at pleasure imagines what he has first perceived through the senses, so also may this effect be brought about through the power of an angel, good or bad, at times with the alienation of the senses and at other times without."[2] Therefore, even outside the domain of possession or obsession, the devil may trouble or excite the imagination.

Further on, in reply to the second objection, the holy doctor adds: "The angel does not change the imagination by impressing on it new images which the senses have not as yet provided: thus he cannot make a blind man picture to himself colour; but he can only awaken or excite those he already possesses by stirring up the animal spirits and moods."

This brings us to a second very important conclusion: that images which the devil is able to produce within us never go beyond our previous knowledge or the natural scope of our mind. Even if he should provoke heavenly images of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or the saints and heavenly joys, or else infernal images of spectres, devils, infinite despair, or again, the most seductive pictures of human passion, there will be no new revelation, no prophecy, nothing transcendental, nothing that we could not have imagined for ourselves in a moment of fever or of exaltation. The transcendence of

[1] *Life*, ch. xxviii. [2] I, q. cxi, a. 3.

imaginative visions, then, will always be a characteristic of the divine, which it is impossible for the devil to imitate or falsify. This is the *first test.*

As the characteristic of Satan is the spirit of evil, the *second test*, which essentially distinguishes his images from those that are divine, is their malice. Nevertheless, these expressly evil and diabolical characteristics are not, usually, formally admitted. The malice is almost always disguised beneath outward harmlessness, nay, even beneath deceptive appearances of virtue and holiness. And it is then that it is important to know the signs by which sooner or later they will betray themselves, and enable us to find them out. Now, these *signs* may be classed in four groups, according as they are looked at from the points of view of the object seen, its mode, its effects, and finally the personality of the seer himself.

1. The *object* does not come from God, but from the devil, if it is contrary to faith or to morals, or at least if it is suspect, still less so if it simply is useless or profane. Thus the young woman of whom Brierre de Boismont speaks, who saw a negro, a horse, a dormouse, a waggon filled with soldiers, and other vain and useless things in her salon, certainly did not have a divine vision.

2. Imperfections in the *modes* of the apparition should be examined in their smallest details. Whilst the divine vision is always consistent with gravity and with the majesty of heavenly things, diabolical shapes never fail to show indications of something unworthy of God, ridiculous, extravagant, exaggerated, or unreasonable.

" Even when it takes the revered form of the Blessed Virgin or a saint," Benedict XIV tells us, " there will always be some detail that is deformed, strange, ridiculous, or dark."[1] A note of raillery very often dominates in these appearances of the devil, who evidently wishes to scoff at us. It has even been noticed that, in these human representations, there is often, either in the forehead, hands, or feet, some indication of the vilest animal. " God permits this," says Père Seraphin, " in order that minds may not be deceived."[2]

3. The *effects* of these visions have still to be studied. The divine vision produces at first a feeling of fear and astonishment in the soul that is conscious of its unworthiness, but it ends by bringing peacefulness and heavenly joy.

[1] *De beatif. sanct.*, bk. ii, ch. li, n. 3.
[2] *Princip. de theol. myst.*, p. 376.

The diabolical vision, on the contrary, begins by bringing joy, a sense of safety and sweetness, and ends in anxiety, sadness, fear, and disgust. The first develops the virtues, especially humility, in the soul of the seer, who will seek to hide such great favours in silence and secrecy. The second, on the contrary, develops feelings of vanity, vainglory, and a wish to parade the vision.

The public effects should also be noticed. Divine visions never produce scandal, disorder, or trouble in the Church, while the others inevitably engender these evils. It is easy to understand that only the work of the devil can produce evil, whereas the providential action of God and of good angels or saints always does good by producing the edification of one's neighbour, the exaltation of Holy Church, and the glory of God.

4. The *personality* of the seer is itself an important source of necessary information, not only because it is important to know if he is in good or bad faith, healthy in mind or ailing and neuropathic—that goes without saying—but also if he is virtuous or sinful, worthy or unworthy of the favours of God.

The visions of souls that are vain and curious, feeble in mind and credulous, easily exalted and taken out of themselves—in a word, those that are very imperfect and too far as yet from real holiness to inspire us with confidence—are always to be suspected. It is these souls that are most easily deceived by the devil.

On the contrary, men of the stamp of the Curé d'Ars, for example, and of his high sanctity, who like him have not a visionary temperament and are too serious to be credulous, and possess all the qualities of a good witness, good eyes, good ears, and good judgement, these may and should inspire us with every confidence.

St Teresa, on several occasions, acknowledges the weakness of her sex and the caution it should inspire with regard to visions; nevertheless, this most sensible remark must not be stretched to excess, for there are women of strength, energy, and solid judgement who ought to inspire us with as much and more confidence than men. She herself is a famous example. A little experience will protect the director from all abuse and will teach him to be free from all prejudice on this delicate point.

If, from these four points of view, there is nothing suspicious

in imaginative visions, and if, on the other hand, their transcendence is manifest, their divine character will be thus well established.

In a great number of cases, it is true, proof will seem more difficult, and the most elementary prudence demands patience and caution. If the vision be truly divine, God will not fail, sooner or later, to give a *sign* sufficient to convince an enlightened theologian in good faith.

§ 4

Intellectual visions

Their nature.—Whilst in outward visions only corporeal beings, or at least aerial and sensible forms, and in imaginative visions only mental images, are perceived, in intellectual visions, on the contrary, all the objects are supersensible and spiritual, such as God, the holy angels, human souls, the mysteries and truths of faith.

Even when some of these objects are in themselves corporeal and sensible, such as our Lord, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, in the intellectual vision they appear abstracted from all sensible form.

Here is a case experienced by St Teresa: " A person who is in no way expecting such a favour nor has ever imagined herself worthy of receiving it, is conscious that Jesus Christ stands by her side, although she sees him neither with the eyes of the body nor of the soul [the imagination]. This is called an intellectual vision; I cannot tell why. . . . At first it distressed her [herself], for she could not understand it; she could see nothing, yet so convinced did she feel that Jesus Christ was thus in some way manifesting himself that she could not doubt that it was some kind of vision. . . . She was alarmed, never having heard of an intellectual vision, nor was she aware that such a thing could be. . . . Her confessor . . . asked her how, if she saw nothing, she knew that our Lord was near her, and bade her describe his appearance. She said that she was unable to do so, nor could she see his face nor tell more than she had already done. . . . She was conscious of his being at her right hand, although not in the way we know an ordinary person to be beside us, but in a more subtle manner which cannot be described. Yet this presence is quite evident and certain, and indeed far more so than the ordinary presence

of other people about which we may be deceived; not so in this."[1]

Intellectual vision, then, may be thus *defined:* It is an intuitive and supernatural knowledge of truths or of spiritual things, or even of corporeal things, but abstracted from all sensible form. Among these truths and facts revealed some entirely *surpass* the natural powers of the mind, such as the understanding of the mysteries of faith or of the secrets of God; others, although natural in themselves, surpass these powers in their mode of manifestation. Thus the victory of Lepanto was a natural truth revealed to St Pius V in a supernatural manner.

Intellectual vision, then, is distinguished from other intellectual knowledge by its *object*, which is transcendent, at least in its mode of manifestation.

It differs from it also in its *form.* It is, in fact, a sudden and immediate intuition without either labour, delays, or successive progress, or calculations of human knowledge. It is a knowledge received and not acquired; it is passive and not active, like all mystical states.

It is, moreover, distinguished by its *duration.* Whilst even the deepest things seen by the mind soon disappear from the field of consciousness, intellectual visions may last a very long time and become almost permanent, to the extent that St Teresa became alarmed at the duration of such a favour. Even when the vision is short, the impression produced is so deep as to be called constant.[2]

St Teresa's profound reason for this is that these kinds of visions are only modes of a union with our Lord which is permanent: also " here forgetfulness is impossible."[3]

Finally, it is distinguished above all by its *effects*, and this is the practical test on which it is impossible to insist too much.

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. viii. St Teresa submitted her doubts to St Peter of Alcantara. " The light he threw on the matter," she says, " was of the clearest; the holy man . . . bade me not to be distressed, but to praise God, and to abide in the full conviction that this was the work of the Spirit of God; for, saving the faith, nothing could be more true, and there was nothing on which I could more firmly rely " (*Life*, ch. xxx). She also consulted Blessed John of Avila, who thus replied: " The method by which the soul knows God without either speech or imagination appears to me to be well assured. I am of opinion that we should not be deceived by following it, and it is approved by St Augustine " (Bl. John of Avila, *Complete Works*, bk. ii, letter 2 [Migne].

[2] See *Castle*, 6th M., ch. viii. [3] *Ibid.*

The first and most remarkable of these effects is a great increase in humility. "This favour brings with it an overwhelming sense of self-abasement and humility; the reverse would be the case, did it come from Satan."[1] The Saint immediately adds: "Although I believe some of the former favours are more sublime, yet this brings with it a special knowledge of God." The greater our lights on the infinite majesty and holiness of God, the greater our conviction of our misery and our nothingness.

"It brings with it graces and spiritual effects which could not come from melancholia. Nor could the devil thus fill the soul with peace, with a constant desire to please God, and such utter contempt of all that does not lead to him."[2] These are so many proofs that the vision which has produced such enlightenments and such powers higher than nature is indeed divine.

If imaginative and intellectual visions are distinct, are they also separable?

Although essentially distinct from the imaginative vision, the intellectual vision may nevertheless accompany it accidentally, in order, for example, to give us an explanation or an understanding of a symbolical or prophetical image. The latter, however, is often produced by itself; thus the dreams of Pharao and of his servants, or the vision of Balthazar, were not understood at the same time as they were seen. There are therefore imaginative visions that are not intellectual.

Are there, on the other hand, intellectual visions free from any natural or supernatural image?

There were lively discussions among the scholastics on this question *à propos* of the need of the intelligence for images in order to understand, signified by the expressive phrase *conversio ad phantasmata*. The Platonic school denied this absolute necessity, whilst it was passionately maintained by the Aristotelian and Thomist school.

Without wishing to reopen a controversy which seems already to have been decided in favour of the Thomists, it is enough to remember that the need of images for all forming of ideas belongs only to the natural order and does not relate to the supernatural.

Now, all the mystics are unanimous in admitting purely intellectual visions without images to be a supernatural fact fully

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. viii. [2] *Ibid.*

established.[1] Purely intellectual supernatural vision, then, is possible, not only according to the Platonist hypothesis, but also to the Thomist.

The *certainty* furnished by such a vision, then, is far above any possible illusion of the *imagination*, and when it is shown by the four above-named tests that the vision is really intellectual, this certainty becomes absolute. All mystics are unanimous on this point, and the reason for it is very simple, whether the object of the vision be an abstract truth or a concrete fact.

In knowledge through an intermediate image, this image may be fictitious or inexact and deceive us. On the contrary, in immediate intuition, it is reality itself which is always seen or heard, for it is impossible to see or hear that which does not exist.

As St Augustine has so well said, in direct intuitions the understanding cannot be deceived: it apprehends that which is; that which does not exist cannot be apprehended by it: *In illis intellectualibus visis non fallitur anima: aut enim intelligit et verum est; aut si non est, non intelligit.*[2]

Not only is such a vision necessarily objective, but also necessarily divine, and it cannot be of diabolic origin; and this second certitude is no less important.

In accordance with the principle which we have already laid down herein, in agreement with St Thomas, God alone is able to act directly on the mind and to enlighten it; the devil can only act on it through the medium of the senses, by exciting the body and troubling its outward or inward organs. Now, it is precisely the property of this vision to contain nothing sensible and to be unable to be induced or disturbed by the senses. Therefore it is outside the scope of the devil and unreachable by his deceit.

In order to deceive us the devil would be reduced to provoking imaginative visions which we might mistake for intellectual; but the snare is too clumsy for an attentive soul and one informed of their difference. Such also is what St Teresa thought.

" It seems to me," she says, " that this is a state with which the devil can least interfere. . . . The vision and the language are matters of such pure spirituality, that there is no turmoil

[1] St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxiv, a. 2, ad 4; Suarez, *De Relig.*, bk. ii, ch. xiv, n. 3.

[2] *De Genes.*, bk. xii, ch. xxv.

of the faculties, or of the senses, out of which . . . the devil can derive any advantage."[1]

Another reason which our Saint calls to mind, for she had already repeated it several times, is that it is only in the second period of the ecstasy that the soul hears divine locutions and receives visions. In the first, all the powers of the soul are wholly lost in God, and it can neither see, nor understand, nor hear anything else. God becomes absolutely its master.[2] Therefore there is no longer room for the devil, nor even for the wanderings of our imagination.

Hence the downright certainty which pervades a soul after having experienced the divine vision. It can no longer doubt that it has seen and heard. " Our Lord wills that this knowledge be so graven on the understanding that we can no more question his presence than that which we see with our eyes. Not so much even; for very often there arises a suspicion that we have imagined things we think we see; but here, though there may be a suspicion in the first instant, there remains a certainty so great that the doubt has no force whatever."[3]

Finally, there is left an effect or pledge of this vision in the soul thus favoured which remains therein as a continual witness of its divine truth, which St Teresa does not scruple to call " infused knowledge." " Even that little, which is nothing more than the bare act of listening, which is granted to it in the other case, is now out of its power. It finds its food prepared and eaten; it has nothing more to do but to enjoy it. It is as if one without ever learning, without taking the pains even to learn to read, and without studying any subject whatever, should find himself in possession of all knowledge, not knowing how or whence it came to him, seeing that he had never taken the trouble even to learn the alphabet. . . . The soul finds itself learned in a moment, and the mystery of the most Holy Trinity so clearly revealed to it, together with other most deep doctrines, that there is no theologian in the world with whom it would hesitate to dispute for the truth of these matters."[4]

We thus see that to the certainty which is produced by the permanent enlightenments of these visions is added a most clear realization of their origin and their divine character.

Nevertheless, we must not draw the conclusion that what the soul has seen or heard in these heavenly visions is always

[1] *Life*, ch. xxvii.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. xxv.
[3] *Ibid.*, ch. xxvii.
[4] *Ibid.*

perfectly *clear and free from obscurity*. Certainty may quite well be here combined with a more or less obscure or even an enigmatical vision. We must therefore point out two kinds of intellectual vision: the one clear and the other obscure.

Obscurity, relative at least, may arise from two causes:

1. First of all, from the very loftiness of the mystery in part revealed, which cannot be expressed in human language, because there is nothing in the natural world which we experience that is comparable or equivalent to it.

Such was the vision of St Paul, rapt to the third heaven, of which he found it impossible to speak clearly. St Teresa, Blessed Angela of Foligno, and many other mystics experienced the same inability to express and narrate to men the heavenly secrets of which they had caught a glimpse.

2. Obscurity may also arise from the fact of the object of the vision being shown but partially, without all its aspects and details, or at least without a complete explanation of its nature. Thus St Teresa, on perceiving the presence of our Lord at her right side, was not able to see either his face or any of the details of his person, although she had a most lively sense of his presence.

In clear and distinct vision, on the contrary, the soul apprehends not only the presence of the object, but it also sees its details and its nature, whether that object be God himself or it be seen in divine enlightenment.

St Teresa thus describes these two kinds of intellectual visions: "God is sometimes pleased," she says, "while a person is engaged in prayer and in perfect possession of her senses, to suspend them and to discover sublime mysteries to her which she appears to see within God himself. This is no vision of the most sacred Humanity, nor can I rightly say the soul *sees*, for it sees nothing; this is no imaginary vision but a highly intellectual one, wherein is manifested how all things are beheld in God and how he contains them within himself. . . . Short as the time lasts, yet, in a manner impossible to describe, God also manifests that in him there is a verity which makes all truth in creatures seem obscure. He convinces the soul that he alone is that truth which cannot lie, thus demonstrating the meaning of David's words in the psalm: 'Every man is a liar,' which could never be thus realized by any other means, however often we might hear that God is truth infallible. . . . These favours should cause no fear, but lead us to praise God for bestowing these graces. I think

neither the devil nor our own imaginations can have much to do with them, therefore the soul may rest in perfect peace."[1]

We must bear well in mind this idea of purely intellectual vision; it will help us later on to understand why it is necessarily free from all danger of being an hallucination.

§ 5

Supernatural hearing

It will be useful to compare by analogy perception through the other spiritual senses—those of hearing, touch, smell, and so on—with visions properly so-called; especially the hearing of inward or outward supernatural words or sounds, which is the most frequent.

This *analogy* is indeed so striking that St Bonaventure, Cardinal Bona, and other mystical writers have desired to extend the word *vision* to every perception of supernatural objects by all the spiritual senses without exception. Thus the various apparitions apprehended not only by sight, but by hearing, touch, smell, and taste, would all equally be called visions.

Such terminology at once seems to us to be strange, and the examples suggested to us are far from convincing. Thus, when Heliodorus was scourged by the angels in the Temple of Jerusalem when he was about to plunder its treasures,[2] these writers tell us that he had a vision, although the angels were invisible to him and only made their presence known by the repeated blows they inflicted on him.

This appears to us to be a pure misuse of words, uselessly complicating the problem of visions, already complex enough in itself. It suffices to give the generic name of *apparitions* to all these phenomena, leaving each kind perfectly distinct, since each has difficulties of its own.

Like visions, the hearing of supernatural words is to be distinguished as *outward*, *imaginative*, and *intellectual*. The first have as their object external words or sounds clearly localized outside, to the right, for instance, or to the left. Imaginative locutions are purely internal and have their seat in the imagination: we imagine that we hear without hearing in reality.

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. x. [2] 2 *Mach.* iii.

Finally, purely intellectual locutions are only called locutions metaphorically: they have nothing sensible in them, either to the hearing or to the imagination; they are the pure expression of intellectual ideas or concepts without any image. The pure spirit speaks them and repeats them to itself; it may also communicate them to other spirits. It is thus that the angels converse with one another without words. We shall have occasion to return to this shortly.

Let us begin with *outward sounds or words.*

We have only to open Holy Writ to find frequent mention of the external word of God or of supernatural beings. Moreover, there is nothing easier for them, although they do not possess vocal organs, than to put the air in motion and produce vibrations of sound there perceptible to the ears of man.

In Genesis we are told that Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord after their disobedience and hid themselves from fear.[1] In the first Book of Kings[2] we are told that the young Samuel, asleep in the Temple, was called four times by the Lord, who entrusted to him his fearful mission.

And it is not only in the Old Testament that these vocal apparitions are numerous, but also in the New. On the banks of the Jordan, at our Lord's baptism, the people heard these words coming down from heaven: " Behold, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."[3]

At the transfiguration of the Saviour on Mount Thabor the same words were again heard.[4] At Jerusalem, on the feast of the Passover, it is the voice of the Father which strikes like a thunder-clap on the ears of the assembled Jews.[5]

After his resurrection our divine Saviour not only shows himself to the Apostles, but says to them, " Peace be with you," and converses with them at length. It is he again, after his ascension, who says to Saul, prostrate on the road to Damascus: " Saul ! Saul ! Why persecutest thou me ?"[6]

In the lives of the saints, even as expurgated by the most rigid historical criticism, we find that the word of God has been heard by these choice souls with like frequency: they have been taught or warned by either imaginative or intellectual words, or again by words heard vocally.

It is enough for us to recall the famous words spoken by God to St Thomas: " Thomas, thou hast written well con-

[1] *Gen.* iii 9 and 10.
[2] iii 3-10.
[3] *Matth.* iii 17.
[4] *Matth.* xvii 5.
[5] *Joan.* xii 28.
[6] *Act.* ix 4-7.

cerning me, what reward dost thou desire?" And the angelic Doctor answered: "None other than thyself, O Lord!"

Moreover, it is not only God or the Word Incarnate who is able to speak directly to man, but also the holy angels, the souls in purgatory, the damned themselves, and the devils.

It was an angel from heaven whom God sent to Agar, wandering with her child Ismael and weeping for his inevitable death, who said to her: "Fear not, Agar: for God hath heard the voice of the boy . . . Arise, take up the boy, for I will make him a great nation."[1]

They were angels who sang at the crib at Bethlehem the noble song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of goodwill," to let the shepherds know the good tidings.[2] It was again an angel, at the empty tomb of the Saviour, who informed the holy women of the resurrection.[3]

In the history of the saints it is enough to cite the famous *voices* of Joan of Arc. According to the official reports of her trial she tells her judges "that when she was thirteen years old (about 1425) she heard a voice from God calling her. It was on a summer's day, in her father's garden, at midday. The voice was to the right of her, on the side where the church was, and there appeared to her a great brightness at the same place; and rarely since had she heard the voice without at the same time seeing this light. At first she was very frightened, but she became reassured and found that the voice was worthy. And she declared to her judges that it came to her from God. The third time she knew it to be the voice of an angel. It was, as later on she came to know, the Archangel St Michael."[4]

After the Archangel came the saints Catherine and Margaret, who appeared to her to speak to her and to give her, in the name of God, the noble mission to save France.

The souls in purgatory are also able to make themselves heard by men, but it will be noticed that in their apparitions it is almost always cries of sadness which they address to those who are able to succour them. Sometimes even, to carry greater conviction, is added the painful touch of the flames which they endure, of which we shall give an account in its proper place.

With regard to the damned or the devils, the holy Gospels narrate to us the words of the wicked rich man to Abraham: *Crucior in hac flamma*,[5] which is at least an intellectual com-

[1] *Gen.* xxi 17-18. [2] *Luc.* ii 14. [3] *Matth.* xxviii 5.
[4] H. Wallon, *Jeanne d'Arc*, bk. i, 2, vol. i, p. 86. [5] *Luc.* xvi 24.

munication; as also the cries of the enraged devils whom our Lord drove from the bodies of the possessed or who were obliged to acknowledge: "Thou art the Son of God."[1] And these were certainly vocal words heard by all present.

But the devils do not content themselves with words; they like to make a noise and uproar: and it is perhaps this that best befits them.

Without going back to the noisy vexations to which they subjected St Antony, St Hilarion, St Pachomius, and other holy anchorites, we know how, in our own day, they vented their rage on St. John Vianney, the Curé d'Ars.

His biographer relates that "generally at midnight three heavy blows against the door of the presbytery warned the Curé d'Ars of the presence of the enemy, and, according to whether his sleep were deep or light, other more or less hard blows followed and drew nearer. After amusing himself by making a terrible din on the stairs, the devil would enter, catch hold of the curtains of the bed and shake them with fury, as though he wanted to drag them down. The poor sufferer could not understand how a shred of them was left. It often happened that the evil spirit knocked like someone wanting to come in; a moment later, without the door opening, he was in the room, moving the chairs, upsetting the furniture, rummaging everywhere, calling to M. le Curé in a mocking voice: 'Vianney! Vianney!', adding to his name outrageous adjectives and threats. At other times, without troubling to come up, he hailed him from the middle of the courtyard, and, after shouting for a long time, imitated a cavalry charge or the sound of an army on the march.

"Sometimes he would knock nails into the floor as with the heavy blows of a hammer, then he would split the wood, plane the boards, saw the panelling, or else bore all night . . . or, again, drum on the table, on the mantelpiece, and chiefly on the water-jug, giving preference to the objects that made the loudest sound.

"Sometimes in the lower room, the Curé d'Ars would hear as it were a large escaped horse prancing round about him; it would rise to the ceiling and then descend heavily with its four hoofs on the ground. . . . At other times there was a noise as of a large flock of sheep passing over his head. It was impossible to sleep with their monotonous tread. One night, when the Curé was more put out than usual, he said: 'My

[1] *Luc.* iv 41.

God, I willingly sacrifice a few hours of sleep for the conversion of sinners.' The infernal flock immediately departed, silence reigned, and the poor Curé was able to sleep for a while. We have all these details from M. Vianney himself."[1]

Having dealt with outward sounds, we must now speak of *internal words*, which, as we have stated, are of two kinds, imaginative and intellectual.

The former are expressed by the imagination—that is, we imagine sounds within which are not really heard at all. Although, strictly speaking, God is able to speak to us in this way, illusion here is too easy to allow the director to be readily convinced.

" Very often," writes St Teresa, " this may be only a fancy; especially with persons of a lively imagination or who are afflicted with melancholy to any marked extent. I think that no attention should be paid to either class of people when they say they see, hear, or learn anything supernaturally. Do not disturb them by saying that it comes from the devil, but listen to them as if they were sick persons. . . . Care should be taken to keep such people from too much prayer and to persuade them, as far as possible, to take no notice of their fancies: the devil makes use of these weak souls to injure others, even if they themselves escape unhurt. There is need for caution both with feeble and strong souls at first, until it is certain from what spirit these things proceed. . . . At the same time the soul should not be too strictly controlled or disquieted, for it cannot help itself in the matter."[2]

Our Saint then gives a description of the *signs* by which it becomes possible to know whether the words come from God, the devil, or the imagination. Here are the chief:

1. If these words tend to comfort you and to turn you from your faults, they are then useful, but do not necessarily come from the Spirit of God.

2. If they bring about what they announce, it is a sign of the supreme efficacy of the word of God, who could not say *Fear not*, or *Be healed*, without at once bestowing peace or health.

3. The word of God always carries with it *peace*. It always leaves the soul in great tranquillity, in calm and pious recol-

[1] Alfred Monnin, *Le Curé d'Ars*, 1863, vol. i, p. 382.
[2] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iii.

lection, always ready to praise God. That which disturbs and brings disquiet, then, does not come from God.

4. Finally, the word of God leaves so profound a *certainty* in the soul that it is never effaced from the memory, so that in spite of every unlikelihood and all material obstacles, the soul retains an invincible confidence in its realization.

Now, words which spring from the imagination never possess these essential characteristics of the word of God; neither its supreme efficacy, nor this peace and joy, nor this invincible and unchangeable certainty. Like all that is human and perishable, they become sooner or later effaced and vanish into nothingness.

The intellectual words which usually accompany intellectual visions have a very different nature from imaginative words, for they do not possess a form capable of being imagined: neither sound, nor articulation, nor cadence, nor anything sensible. God knows how to speak to us without words, and that which he tells us in the depth of the soul, in the most profound secrets of the heart, is so distinct and so enlightening that the very mode of hearing, in which the imagination can have no part, is a complete assurance against the risk of the latter's illusions or those of the devil, who can only deceive us by means of it.

At the same time, the wonderful impression which these wholly spiritual words produce in the higher part of the soul impress it with the unshakeable conviction that they come from God. It is the certainty of an impression experienced without intermediate image.

We quote here the beautiful thoughts of St Teresa on a subject which was familiar to her:

"What it seems to me to be is this: it is our Lord's will in every way that the soul should have some knowledge of what passes in heaven; and I think that, as the blessed there without speech understand one another—I never knew this for certain till our Lord of his goodness made me see it; he showed it to me in a trance—so it is here: God and the soul understand one another, merely because his majesty so wills it, without the help of other means, to express the love there is between them both. In the same way on earth, two persons of sound sense, if they love each other much, can even, without any signs, understand one another only by their looks. It must be so here, though we do not see how, as these two lovers earnestly regard each the other: the bridegroom says so to the bride in

the Canticle, so I believe, and I have heard that it is spoken of there. Oh, marvellous goodness of God! . . . Oh, ingratitude of men, how far will it go? I know by experience that what I am saying is true, and that all we can say is exceedingly little, when we consider what thou doest to the soul which thou hast led to such a state as this."[1]

§ 6

Their hallucinatory counterfeits

On reading what we have just written concerning visions and supernatural locutions, every reflective mind—without being in any way sceptical or opposed to the supernatural—cannot fail to put to itself the *objection* of hallucinatory counterfeits. So we hasten to deal with hallucinations.

This is all the more necessary in that widespread acquaintance with them has produced so incomplete and inaccurate a knowledge of these curious morbid phenomena that nowadays it is fashionable to discard with contempt every marvellous fact with the mere suspicion: *It is an hallucination!* Henceforth this is a magical expression, because ill-defined and vaguely understood: a convenient method of dismissing a troublesome subject.

What, then, is hallucination? Let us try to explain the *idea* of it, its *theory*, its distinctive *signs*, its *causes*, and its essential difference from *simple illusion*, *dreams*, *delirium*, and *madness*. The advance made in physiological and psychical science will here help us immensely.

I. *The idea of hallucination*

The *definition* which appears to us to be clearest and least disputable is the following: Hallucination is a pathological occurrence which consists in the false outward reflection of an inward image.

In the normal state our five outward senses receive and perceive actions or physical images from outward objects which make an impression on them. In certain abnormal and morbid states—of which we shall seek the causes—there are, on the contrary, operations or internal images which are projected outwardly, in virtue of acquired habits, and thus take on the

[1] *Life*, ch. xxvii.

deceptive appearance of objects perceived by the five senses, such objects being imaginary and unreal. It is then a counterfeit of sensation.

We give here several typical *examples* drawn from the works of some of the most authoritative alienist physicians, such as Baillarger, Brierre de Boismont, Esquirol, Gratiolet, Tissot, Morel, Charcot, and so on.[1]

A man is in his room, and sees depicted on its walls the Alps or Pyrenees with their snow-clad peaks, their forests, their torrents and cascades. . . . He hears the concerts from the Opera . . . he exchanges conversation with other speakers, at times visible to him, at others not. . . . Without opening his mouth he tastes delicious food . . . he inhales perfumes of which those around him have no suspicion. . . . This man is suffering from hallucination.

" I knew," says Baillarger,[2] " a lady who was continuously obsessed by a most offensive smell, which she thought was given out from her body. She begged people not to approach her, and always drew back if anyone tried to do so. One day, when Esquirol invited her to go for a walk in a kitchen garden, she refused, for fear that she might kill the plants by the pestilential odour of her whole person."

" For five years," a lady told Brierre de Boismont,[3] " I have heard *voices* which speak to me so coherently and with such natural inflections that, since they began until to-day, I have always thought them real. Sometimes these voices sound loudly in my ears, at others they are inward and silent, like the words of a book read with the lips. . . . The voices speak to me both day and night; they are equally distinct at both times. Morning, evening, darkness, have no effect on them. They are as clear and distinct in the middle of the day when I have no distractions as when circumstances are quite otherwise. At this moment, though I am speaking to you, I hear them perfectly, in spite of the noise around us. Their conversation runs on every subject, but chiefly on my customary affairs, and particularly on thoughts of violence which never cease to assail me."

[1] Baillarger, *De l'influence de l'état intermédiaire à la veille et au sommeil sur la production et la marche des hallucinations;* Esquirol, *Des maladies mentales;* Gratiolet, *Anatomie comparée du système nerveux;* Tissot, *L'Imagination;* Morel, *Des maladies mentales;* Charcot, *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux faites à la Salpêtrière;* Brierre de Boismont, *Des hallucinations*, etc.

[2] *Des maladies mentales*, vol. i, p 335.

[3] *Des hallucinations*, p. 579.

Hallucinations of *touch* are less frequent. Nevertheless cases, although rare, are well attested.

"We have at Charenton," relates Esquirol,[1] "a monomaniac who is persuaded that he is stabbed with knives and daggers every night, both in the back and the chest; sometimes an arm is cut off, at others a leg; he is even decapitated. When it is pointed out to this unfortunate man that his head is on his shoulders, that he has all his limbs, that there is no wound or scar on his body, he answers that the scoundrels are magnetizers or Freemasons who possess the secret of repairing his members without it being observed; if one insists he will treat him as an accomplice of these brigands: 'Kill me, kill me! I cannot stand the sufferings which they inflict, nor endure their cruelty.'"

Hallucinations of *sight* are much more numerous. Here is an account given by one such patient to Brierre de Boismont:[2] "I was in the bath which the doctor had prescribed for me on account of my high fever, when I saw, just as I see you now, a man dressed all in black who had just entered the room; he looked at me fixedly, made faces at me, sought to annoy me. Indignant at such behaviour, I showed him, by the expression of my face, how angry I was; he then approached the stove pipe, grasped it and clambered to the top and disappeared at the opening. I was still astounded at this strange sight when I perceived three men coming out from under the bed; they came towards me, making the same gestures and faces as the first. Fury seized me; I called out in a loud voice for my knife to kill them; they also clambered up the stove and disappeared through the same hole. I had never seen them before; their faces are so engraved on my mind that I should recognize them anywhere. . . . Most assuredly I felt a moment of over-excitement; as to the reality of the facts I would testify to it with my blood."

There are rarer cases, well known, however, in psychotherapy, in which the hallucinatory phantasmagoria may be thrown out at will. Thus Talma, the famous tragedian, when he wished, saw his audience transformed into skeletons; and a certain English painter, after having once seen his models, reproduced their image at will and made it pose before him in order to draw from it. He also projected it at will on to paper and drew its contours with a pencil.

[1] *Des maladies mentales*, vol. i, p. 106.
[2] *Des hallucinations*, p. 87.

These are among the most simple and most authentic examples of this curious phenomenon of hallucination. This mere account of them is enough to justify the definition which we have given of it. It is obviously a cerebral disorder, organic or functional, and therefore, as we have said, belongs to the sphere of pathological medicine, which, however, has so far not discovered any positive cure for it.

Now this nervous trouble has the characteristic and essential effect of making us *project outwardly*, mentally and physically, our own mental images or reveries, in imitation of perceptions of the outward senses, of which hallucination is the counterfeit or gross caricature, as will be shown in greater detail by what follows. The illusion is occasionally so great that it often induces delusion, and the patient may then become over-excited, and finally mad.

But these new effects are only accidental and accessory, for the very clumsiness of the caricature, as we shall show at greater length, enables it to be distinguished by any man who is calm and sufficiently master of himself to make a comparison and form a healthy judgement on what he experiences. Moreover, we have excluded from our definition an *error* of judgement, which, in spite of its frequency, is far from being universal in and inseparable from cases of hallucination. It exists even in the dream, which is not an hallucination.

It remains for us, through a deeper study of this phenomenon, to explain its nervous mechanism and to suggest a theory of it. The parallel between the theory and the mechanism of normal sensation will be a revelation for apologetics.

II. *Its theory*

As hallucination of *sight* is the clearest and the most complete type of hallucination, we shall begin by explaining this. In the same way that the normal functioning of sight has the privilege of throwing light on the mechanism of all the other senses, so its abnormal operation in hallucination will make known to us, by analogy, the procedure of all the other forms of hallucination.

But as we cannot understand the abnormal action of sight without knowing its normal action, let us briefly call it to mind.

1. *Normal objective vision.*—The eye receives luminous rays emanating from some outside object—say the white line AB. According to the laws of optics these rays pass through the

pupil of the eye, cross each other, and imprint on the retina a reversed image of this object: BA. At the same moment that it is struck by this luminous action the living and sensitive organ of the retina becomes conscious of it—that is, it feels or perceives it. And as it feels that this luminous action which strikes it is foreign to it, it at once casts each luminous ray away, outside, in the direction whence it came, as if to put it back in its place and restore it to its agent. Thus each luminous point being returned in its own direction, the complete image is corrected and restored to its normal position. The distance to which the eye projects is regulated either by the convergence of the luminous rays themselves or by long practice, the result of training the eye, more or less perfectly, by experiments of touch.

Those of our readers who have done a little photography—and they are numerous—will have already noted the comparison between the eyeball and the camera obscura. The iris and its pupil are the diaphragm of a convergent lens; the retina is the sensitive plate on which the inverted image is printed. If this plate had consciousness it would feel each luminous point striking it in the direction whence it came, just as my hand in grasping a straight stick apprehends also its presence and direction.

Let us now pass on to the inverse phenomenon: the camera of the photographer becomes the magic-lantern; instead of receiving images from without it projects its own outside. All that is needed for this is to manipulate the same camera the other way round. In place of the sensitive plate is inserted any strongly lighted object, such as a transparent picture, like a good slide. The picture on this slide at once passes back through the lens and diaphragm by which it had come in the first instance, and is thrown outside on to a screen placed at a suitable distance. It is the same optical phenomenon as at first, but produced backwards, obviously showing that the same instrument may be used both the right way and its reverse, and that all our senses can perform their functions in a double way, either normally or abnormally, objectively or subjectively. This is quite easy to demonstrate as regards sight, as we shall proceed to show.

2. *Abnormal subjective vision.*—After looking fixedly at some brightly lighted object, such as the flame of a candle, the darkened laths of a Venetian blind through which the bright daylight is shining, or still more if we are rash enough to stare

at the radiant disc of the sun, the impression on the retina, being too strong, will be continued in an abnormal manner, and we shall go on seeing these divers objects, even after turning our backs on them or shutting our eyes; and if we open the latter in the dark we shall throw the same picture on a screen.

The projected picture may pass through all the colours of the rainbow, or be modified according to the well-known law of contrasts or complementary colours in light. It is obvious that all these fantastic pictures are a creation of the sensitiveness of the retina, and are thrown outwards by the eye in the same way as by a magic-lantern, either on a screen, or on some other object, or into the air, in whatsoever direction we may look.

We therefore clearly feel that these pictures which we carry within us, and are able to place anywhere by the movement of the eyes, have nothing objective or real in them; they are personal or subjective and imaginary. These pictures that persist after the action of the light has passed, on account of the persistence itself, have been called *consecutive images*.

Now, as the reader will have already grasped, the hallucinatory image is a kind of consecutive image. Its source alone is different. Instead of being provoked by some outside cause which has impressed us too strongly, the retinal picture springs from an inward morbid cause which is an abnormal excitement of the imagination. The latter faculty, which has received its images from the five external senses, may, in an access of fever, such, for example, as toxicomania, send them back, so to speak, with combinations, successions, and in most fantastic order, truly worthy of that "will-o'-the-wisp." That is to say, the imagination, having been set in motion by the outward senses, is able, in turn, to upset them by producing in them an echo of its own wanderings.

The imagination then becomes the new—and the most important—mainspring of consecutive images, including all hallucinatory images. They obey the same optical and physiological laws, which stand out in direct contrast with the laws of normal vision. This comparison is most instructive, and one which it is of supreme importance to make clear, in order to discern true natural or supernatural visions from all hallucinations.

III. *The distinctive signs*

In order to distinguish hallucinatory vision from normal vision, it is enough to compare the signs indicative of the subjective vision of consecutive images with those of normal or objective vision. There will be seen to be so great a contrast between these two kinds of visions, so glaring an opposition, that it is impossible for any reasonable man who reflects, and even for one suffering from hallucination, if he remain calm and master of himself, wholly to confuse them.

We give here some of the most striking characteristics of the hallucinatory image.

1. *Its independence of an outside object.*—Normal vision is absolutely dependent on the real presence of this object and the suitable direction of the eyes. If these are closed or the back is turned, the vision ceases at once; if the object goes further away or comes nearer, or changes its shape, the vision varies accordingly; if it disappears the vision ceases.

The vision of a subjective image, on the contrary, is independent of a real external object. It is still seen when the eyes are shut, and it is impossible to turn the back on it. It is seen wherever the regard is directed, because it is borne within oneself, in the eyes: it is therefore thrown out in every direction where the look is cast. It is then indeed an internal vision and not an external sight.

2. *Its dependence on our eyes.*—In normal vision, motionless outward objects appear to us to be stationary, in spite of the movements of our eyes or head. The subjective image, on the contrary, moves with our eyes, or, if our eyes be fixed, with the motions of the head. Moreover, we may turn it about in every direction with the varying motion of the eyes; and if the eyeball be pressed with the finger, the image becomes divided in two. It therefore depends on the eye and in no way on some external object.

3. *Its superposition* on objects actually seen.—As subjective vision is able to be produced during normal vision, its fantastic images become superposed on those realities which surround us. The latter then appear to us *through* the subjective image, as though we looked at them through a transparent gauze or through glasses with the image painted on them.

An examination of this superposition shows us also that the subjective image is hazy, with its contours more or less ill-defined, like a light transparent cloud, which changes little by

little, alters its shape, and ends by disappearing like a phantom. It therefore possesses none of the precise, fixed, resisting qualities of a real object.

4. Its *internal and subjective* character.—It requires an effort of self-reflection, of reflection on our own sensations and organic movements, in order to study the subjective image, to analyse it and account for it. It is then a reflex vision, a consciousness of ourselves, whereas the normal vision is a direct sight. All that is needed is to direct attention to the external object to view it at leisure, without turning back on ourselves.

5. *The projection of the subjective image is produced in the reverse way from the projection of normal vision*, and here we have an extremely remarkable physiological test of the highest importance. For when the consecutive image of, say, the flame of a candle, or the solar disc, is projected on to a screen, its diameter becomes greater if the distance from the screen be increased, and less when the latter is brought nearer: it becomes elongated if the screen is inclined, exactly in the same way as an image projected thus from a magic-lantern.

On the contrary, a real picture painted on the same screen and examined by normal vision appears smaller if the screen is moved away, greater if brought nearer; and if the screen be inclined, the diameter of the picture is diminished in the direction of the inclination in the way described by painters as "foreshortening"—that is, the circle becomes an ellipse by the extension of its diameter. Now this is precisely what takes place with the rays of an external picture received into the photographic camera—such as the eye; and it is just the reverse of what takes place in the projection of the consecutive image, which is thrown out from the eye, as we have said, as if by a magic-lantern.[1]

6. Here is another curious detail which is useful in discovering hallucination: when, instead of receiving external luminous rays (normal vision), the eye throws out its own light and its retinal images (subjective vision), it may happen that

[1] As we may infer, this projection outside the eye is very real and physical. Pierre Janet has even observed some sufferers from hallucination who could trace the outline and details of their image thrown on to white paper (Conference on divination by means of mirrors, *Bulletin de l'Univ. de Lyon*, July, 1897, and *Névroses et idées fixes*, vol. i, p. 407). We ourselves, in 1888, published some trials of projections on photographic plates, in accordance with Aristotle, who states that these projections are able to tarnish silver mirrors. But it is not necessary to insist on this here.

the pencil of rays thus thrown out *is reflected as it leaves the eye on to the transparent cornea* and produces there a first picture, very small indeed, but clearly visible to a close observer, as has been several times demonstrated, especially on the Tilly clairvoyants. The image, in miniature, of the object they described, as it appeared to them, was seen in their eyes.

Let us hear the testimony of a witness whose competence and impartiality are beyond suspicion: " I saw the regard of the clairvoyant become fixed and her look assume the expression of desire and happiness which she has in ecstasy. Although very near . . . I followed with my binoculars the slightest movement of her face and watched her eyes incessantly . . . and I saw in a niche . . . a small statue of the Virgin which looked as though it were enamel. It was an elegant figure, the folds of the dress fell gracefully (as the clairvoyant described) . . . I was able to study this phenomenon sufficiently long to be absolutely certain that I was not the victim of an illusion."[1]

Doubtless an *external* object, luminous and visible to all, could reflect its image on to the eyes of the clairvoyant. But the Virgin and niche described, being outwardly invisible, did not fulfil these conditions.

Moreover, an outside object when reflected in the eye does not produce there a simple direct image—as in the Tilly case—but a triple image, as demonstrated by physicians: one *direct*, engendered by the front surface of the cornea; another reversed, *reflected* by the back part of the lens; a third *direct*, due to its front face. They are all three of different size and brightness, but of exceedingly small dimensions.[2] The Tilly image, single and sufficiently large to be easily seen with a binocular, corresponds, on the contrary, with the projection of the consecutive and hallucinatory image, refracted as it leaves the eye by the transparent cornea.

7. Finally, and here we have a fact less difficult to observe, the vision of an hallucinatory image, far from being clearly visible at once by the clairvoyant—as would be the case with normal vision of a real object placed within range—*becomes only gradually visible, with increasing clearness*. This is a manifest sign of a subjective operation.

Thus there appears first only a vague light, then a hazy white

[1] Letter of M. Lance-Briand of September 27, 1897, reproduced in the newspaper *La Vérité* and in M. Brettes' report: *Les apparitions de Tilly, consultations theologiques*, 67 pages (Tequi), pp. 20-22.

[2] See, for example, Béclard, *Physiologie*, vol. ii, p. 237 (7th edit.).

spot, and it is in this mist that little by little the contours of the picture are traced, with its details and colours, which, before becoming fixed, pass through different phases and transformations. Among the numerous experiments by which this is shown it suffices to cite two.

The first is that of *crystal-gazing*, well known to fortune-tellers. The visionary who gazes into the mysterious crystal begins by seeing nothing at all, then he sees there vague clouds, then in these clouds personages are traced; finally these become clearly defined, move, and often they speak. Such is the classic *crescendo* of hallucination with its paroxysm and its decline.

The second fact is the same phenomenon observed on the cornea of the eye, thus becoming visible to the spectators themselves. Let us again quote the testimony of the same observer of the clairvoyants of Tilly:

"I made arrangements to examine her (Marie Martel) at my leisure . . . and constantly looked into her eyes, to ascertain whether I had not been deceived the day before. Now, the *spot* which I had noted was, to my great astonishment, again produced. I left my place in order to examine this phenomenon more closely. I then saw that what I had taken for a film was the reproduction of a *cloud*, formed of little flaky clouds, which occupied, in height, the whole of the coloured portion of the eye and had a rotatory movement on themselves. Presently the upper part of this cloud became bright, and finally the whole. The smaller clouds that were in front became dispersed, and I saw in the middle of a niche a small statue of the Blessed Virgin, and so on."[1]

This testimony, in spite of the subtlety of certain of its details, which would gain by further verification, is in the main undeniable. It makes quite clear, and enables us to grasp in action, the subjective and progressive work of the senses of the clairvoyant and the laborious method of their hallucination.

Moreover, this phenomenon, strange as it may appear, is only the magnifying or notable accentuation of a more general and better-known phenomenon. Thus the eyes of a cat, and of night-animals, are illumined in the darkness and throw out a light which lightens them and guides them. It is like a lantern, an electric beacon, with which are also provided certain fishes sought by the *Talisman* in the dark depths of the ocean.

[1] Letter of M. Lance-Briand, *ibid.*

Even in broad daylight the eye in anger can dart forth a glint of light, the look is able to fascinate and to produce physical or chemical effects, as already observed by Aristotle as regards a silver mirror. Hence, perhaps, popular belief in the "evil eye," "charms," and the like, and such truth as they may contain.

However this may be, it remains an established fact that the eye can play a *double role:* that of receiver and camera in normal vision, and, in subjective vision, the reversed one of an apparatus of projection. In the first, it receives, passively, images coming from outside, of which it becomes conscious; in the second, it throws out its own images, and this is what happens in hallucination, which we must no longer confuse with normal vision. This would be to mix up the action of the magic-lantern with that of the camera obscura; to make contraries identical; to give and receive; to allow entrance whilst sending out; to be at once both active and passive.

Consequently, to venture to look upon normal vision and hallucination as strong or weak states of one and the same phenomenon; to see in them only a difference of degree, when their natures are diametrically opposed, is, in our view, the greatest aberration of modern philosophy, which Taine was pleased to bring into relief by defining normal vision as a *true hallucination.*

This pleasantry is not only a challenge to common sense, but is, moreover, a denial or lack of knowledge of the most elementary data of science.

Nevertheless, let us admit, this paradox is a logical deduction from the subjective hypothesis of Descartes, according to which our intuitions of sense reach images only, and never the real. We might thus conclude that these images are perhaps true, perhaps false, and that our life of sense is a perpetual hallucination, in which the true and the false are indiscernible. But such a conclusion only condemns the subjectivist principle from which it flows, and even destroys that principle.

On the contrary, according to us, the intuition of the senses grasps external and real objects, whilst hallucination only grasps images and fanciful creations. The difference is perfectly clear, and normal perception is easily distinguished from hallucinatory counterfeits.

To complete the contrast between the two phenomena we must study the different causes which produce them. This experimental counter-proof is most instructive.

IV. *Their very different causes*

In order to see some sensible object with my eyes it is enough for it to be present and for me to look at it in the normal way: it is impossible not to see it when these conditions are fulfilled. Now none of these are required in the case of hallucinatory vision, the causes of which are therefore very different.

It is useless here to seek the *habitual causes* which predispose to hallucination, such as certain temperaments and certain maladies. They belong rather to the domain of pathology, to which we refer the reader.

The *actual causes* of hallucinatory crises are of greater interest for us because they show us these phenomena entirely dependent on our subjective sensibility, and the latter more or less dependent, directly or indirectly, on our will, which never is the case in the normal vision of a real object, which is always independent of our will.

Hallucinatory crises, the release of which depends entirely on *our will*, are facts well known and perfectly authenticated. We cite here a few examples.

Newton, after having been so rash as to stare at the solar disc for a long time, retained for many years, perhaps for the rest of his life, the singular power of calling it up before his eyes at will, at any hour of the day or night, in the same way that this happens involuntarily with a consecutive image.

Pascal, when he thought of it, saw again, everywhere, the famous precipice where once he just missed being killed.

Goethe and Müller, according to Helmholz, were able to call up divers apparitions which had left a vivid impression on them, at will. It was enough for them to close their eyes and contemplate the darkened field of vision.

The famous French tragedian, Talma, possessed the magic power of making images of skeletons appear before him and of throwing them at will on his visitors, thus transforming them into skeletons.

Alfred de Musset, Maupassant, and many others had analogous gifts.

Not only can hallucination yield to our own will, but also to the *wills of others*. The effects of suggestion in the hypnotic state are as wonderful as they are authentic. The hypnotizer may suggest what hallucinations he will to the subject. He is thus able to affect the five senses and successively produce

hallucinations of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. We again give some examples.

Addressing his subject, the hypnotizer says: "Look at that blue bird." Immediately the idea of this non-existent bird seizes the imagination of the patient, becomes the one object of his fancy, the *idée fixe;* and this image, developing with the intensity common to fixed ideas, ends by affecting the outward senses and by producing in the eyes a true consecutive image of a blue bird, which is thrown out and localized among the surrounding objects. . . . The patient actually begins to pursue the blue bird.

The hypnotizer tells a mother that her child is weeping; immediately the mother hears its distressing cries, talks to it in order to console it, approaches to nurse it, and explains the cause of its sufferings, or suggests a remedy to relieve them.

Again, a patient, when told to listen to military music passing beneath the window, or the song of the birds, or the rumbling of thunder, hears, distinguishes, and describes the songs and different sounds, and experiences pleasure or the reverse.

Mgr. Méric rightly says that it is easier to provoke hallucinations of sight and hearing than those of taste, smell, and touch, because these last sensations affect the imagination less vividly than those of sight and hearing, and therefore have a rarer and more difficult after-effect on the external senses, the seat of hallucination. This is very true. Nevertheless, such hallucinations have been well authenticated in the case of subjects with greater sensibility.

Dr. X— put one of his patients to sleep one day and offered him a "juicy pear," which was swallowed in small mouthfuls and found juicy. Now the said pear was really only a common raw potato. To another patient is offered a glass of water, with the words, "Here is some champagne," and he drinks it at once with relish. Or else: "Here is some *eau royale hongroise* as an aperient by order of the doctor"; and the patient, drinking it with a grimace, shortly afterwards experiences the physical effects of a purgative. The proffering of an ipecacuanha bottle, even though empty, is able to produce the effect of an emetic, and the application of a pretended blister to the skin, though nothing but a piece of blotting-paper, may produce real œdema with its accompanying pain.

Dr. Pitres, in his clinical lectures, brought forward his favourite subject, Albertine, who, in succession, takes a hospital

mixture for anisette, then a bitter solution of sulphate of quinine for *eau sucrée*. She then inhales with delight from a bottle of ammonia which she takes for *eau de Lubin*, and her sense of smell is so absolutely in accordance with the suggestion of her hypnotizer that when he offers her a bottle of pure water, suggesting that it is a choking liquid, she utters a cry and falls back as though she were being choked. All these experiments, marvellous as they appear, have become classical, nor do we require more.

Our conclusion, then, is that hallucinations, very different from the normal perception of external objects, may be freed and governed by the will, either our own or that of others.

There is no reason to exclude from these outside wills that of the *devil*. His power over the imagination is well known. Experiences related in Holy Writ or the lives of the saints put it beyond doubt, and our great theologians, such as St Thomas, have studied it with care.

But is it possible for the good angels and God himself to produce hallucinations ? This is a question very rarely asked, and one that what we have just explained as to the nature of hallucinations will enable us to solve.

Hallucination, as we have seen, is essentially a deceit, since it consists in a false external projection of an internal image. It is then incompatible with the sovereign truth of God or the holiness of the good angels. They are doubtless able to awaken in our minds useful or revealing images; show us symbolic forms, for a symbol is not a lie;[1] but of what use for them to give us a deceptive appearance of real external objects, since these do not exist ? Such deceit would not only be contrary to the truth of God and the good angels, but perfectly useless for our instruction or edification.

We may then conclude that all vision admitted to be hallucinatory by the characteristic signs which we have enumerated cannot be said to be divine, but should be attributed either to the devil or to some natural pathological cause.

Nevertheless, the intervention of the will in hallucinatory crises may be only indirect and be brought about artificially by means of *poisonous agents*, such as alcohol, opium, hashish, belladonna, and so on, or else again by all those physical and

[1] *Cum fictio nostra refertur ad aliquam significationem, non est mendacium, sed aliqua figura veritatis* (St Augustine, *De quaest. evang.*, bk. ii, quaest. ult. in princ.). Such are the figures of the Apocalypse.

moral causes which, by weakening or exciting the nervous system to excess, produce an unbalanced state.

Let us but note fasts and excessive vigils, over-exaggerated tension of the mind, too ardent passions, too vivid emotions, violent anger, sudden fear, which may, in vivid imaginations, provoke the awakening of hallucinatory phantoms.

Instances of hallucinations being awakened by the passions or vice abound. Thus drunkenness leads surely to hallucinations characterized by terror. Dr. Brierre de Boismont cites numbers of drunkards who see the walls covered with skeletons, grinning devils, or fearful and unclean animals—rats, bats, snakes, swine, and the like.

Opium smokers often see fountains of fire or phosphorescent vapours rising up in the shape of luminous ghosts. Gratiolet, after taking an opium pill on going to bed, woke up with a start and saw a gigantic grinning fiery head. Théophile Gautier, on once taking hashish, was visited by strange bacchanals, of which he gave a fearful description in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.[1]

With regard to hallucinations caused by *sudden* and prolonged *emotions*—even though they be the most respected religious emotions—we will here confine ourselves to a remark made already by M. Maury with great acumen and depth of psychological observation.

It is that hallucinations do not always coincide with the apogee of nervous excitement, but oftener with the beginning of the fatigue which follows it. It is the tired mind that lets go the reins of government which the imagination bears away to foolishness, like a furious horse which does not bolt in the ordinary way whilst he feels the reins securely held, but often when they are relaxed or the rider lets them go. This is an important point, and will prevent us from confusing cerebral fatigue with apparent calmness of mind and mastery of oneself.

V. *Hallucination compared with illusion, dreams, delirium, and madness*

It remains for us to avoid another no less serious confusion, which consists in not knowing how to distinguish hallucination itself from certain phenomena which approach it more or less closely, yet are thoroughly different, such as simple *illusion*, *dreams*, *delirium*, and *madness*. Let us clearly state these

[1] Vol. xiii, p. 528.

different ideas in order to protect ourselves from most regrettable misunderstandings.

1. First as regards *illusion*. Everyone is agreed that there are numerous illusions of sense which have no connection with hallucination. But it is difficult clearly to state a theory which will enable them to be distinguished. Let us, however, make an attempt.

We shall begin by eliminating what are called " acoustic or optical illusions," for these are not true illusions. The echo which sends back the sound of the voice is quite real and has nothing illusory about it: it is a fact that is perceived such as it is, and one quite well explained by the laws of acoustics.

In the same way the stick in the water which appears to be bent, does in reality send into the eye refracted rays and a refracted image, which would be seen to be such by means of a photographic plate; and the eye would be malformed if it were to see it otherwise. If I draw the conclusion that it is the actual substance of the stick that is bent, that is an error of judgement and not an optical illusion. The most that can be said is that I may be induced to form a wrong judgement by accidents of light, but these are real, and are not illusions properly so-called.

Leaving, then, on one side these pretended acoustic or optical illusions, which are really physical and objective phenomena, in order to study only true psychical and subjective illusions, we again ask the same question: What is an illusion ? The dictionaries reply: " It is a false appearance caused by the imagination."

This definition itself needs to be explained, for, though exact, it is far from being enlightening, and requires to be made clear by an examination of the role the imagination plays in perception by the five external senses.

Certainly the intuition of the real, through the five external senses, is not an act of the imagination, and we have unmasked Taine's paradox, which presumed to maintain that it is a " true hallucination." And yet is there such a thing as an act of perception purely of the senses, in which the imagination in no way intervenes ? We do not think so.

We are, on the contrary, of opinion that its role is here very great. On this all psychologists are agreed: moreover, in their writings they have all devoted at least a chapter, and occasionally whole volumes, to the subject, under some such title as the *Association of Images*.

In fact, it is the imagination which completes the work begun by the external senses. Each sense, taken alone, contributes to total knowledge only the elements—essential and objective, no doubt, but very poor and incomplete—which require to be completed and interpreted by information already acquired by the other senses and stored in the form of images in the imagination. This addition, or association, of former images with the actual data of such and such a sensation is being continuously and more or less unconsciously effected, like all other operations that are due to instinct, to education of the senses and to their inveterate habits.

Here are some familiar examples which will show how the association of images in turn *completes*, *interprets*, *rectifies*, and at times *misrepresents* and distorts the data of the senses.

A *round* ball placed before the eyes produces the impression or image of a *flat* circle, and nevertheless it does not appear to me to be flat, but spherical. A right cylinder in the same way produces to the eyes or on a photographic plate the impression of a parallelogram, and, nevertheless, I see that it is cylindrical. An inclined circle resembles an ellipse, and, nevertheless, I know it to be a circle. No retinal image is either hollow, or in relief, or has a succession of planes nearer or more distant, and yet I see hollows, reliefs, and depths. How is this ?

It is that the imagination, by means of automatic and unconscious labour, has completed, interpreted, rectified the visual image by means of data already furnished by the experience of the five senses, above all that of touch, which alone is able to take count of distance, relief, and depth. Thus it is that, through an association of images which has become spontaneous, it interprets the direction of certain lines of perspective, the gradation of certain shadows, and translates them into distance, relief, or depth.

The art of perspective rests entirely on this property of the imagination. A man without culture, and still more birds and other animals, are easily deceived by its artifices.

It has been found possible in certain dioramas to blend the painted objects so cleverly with those that are real that the most practised eye can no longer distinguish, from a distance, where the work of nature ends and that of the brush begins. All spectators, without exception, are deceived.

What we say of perspective may also be said of colours and other details of painting. The art of the painter consists in

an aptitude to awaken the imagination of the spectator by means of certain natural features far more than in exactly reproducing real objects.

There is no picture which, if seen too closely, is not coarse and repellent. The most beautiful stage backcloths, which if viewed closely appear to have been done with a broom, produce, at a distance, marvellous effects of harmony and depth. The cloth contains only a roughly outlined sketch; it is the imagination of the spectator which completes it, fills up the gaps, rounds the contours, blends the colours, separates the groundwork, throws back or brings forward the figures, synthesizes all the details by a suitable distribution of light and shade, colour and life.

In a word, the picture which you admire is partly, even to a great extent, your own work, almost as much as that of the artist; part of it springs from your creative imagination in order to complete the work of the master, whose merit it was to know how to awaken and direct mechanically, so to speak, by means of features borrowed from the language of nature, your labour of mental interpretation.

However, in the example which we have just described, the illusion comes rather from the art of the picture than from the mind of the spectator. Here is another, in which the state of mind of the spectator plays the chief role.

A somewhat nervous man is walking alone at nightfall or by moonlight in a lonely country. He is sad and pensive. Suddenly at a turn in the path he hears a slight noise. He stops, turns pale and steps backward, for he thinks he sees some strange figure which threatens him moving in the bushes; perhaps the shade of some departed person revisiting the earth. After a moment of this vain fright he recovers his calmness and is reassured: it is only a rustle of dead leaves, a shadow of the moon which his imagination transformed into an object of terror. Here the illusion consists in a false interpretation of the real—that is, in the addition to the real data of the external senses of a mental image which transforms and deforms them. The real blame lies with our imagination.

It is, above all, when the imagination is vividly preoccupied by certain ideas or emotions that there is a risk of its misinterpreting and misrepresenting the data of the senses. Has it never, for instance, happened to us, when under the influence of certain preoccupations, that we have heard a word quite different from that which is really said to us? A vague similarity in the

sound is enough for the involuntary substitution of one word for another. Many unconsciously false testimonies have thus for their cause a former prejudice or a passing emotion which distorts the real. And this illusion may be involuntary, or at least may begin in quite good faith; for a closer examination is often enough to dispel the misunderstanding.

Brierre de Boismont relates that Walter Scott, during the time that his mind was greatly excited by the news of the death of his friend Byron, on entering his dining-room, thought that he saw the image of the famous departed in front of him. There were undoubtedly the clothes, the pose, the features of the great poet. He drew near to examine him more closely, and saw that the vision was due to a peculiar arrangement of a cloth hanging over a screen. Many other apparitions, it must be admitted, have no other foundation than this onslaught of a predisposed imagination, which gives to a piece of furniture, a garment, a bush, the appearance of a skeleton, a shroud, or a ghost.

And what is most curious in these illusions is that each person may see different figures in one and the same object according to the bent of his mind or to the preoccupations of the time. Thus, in the spots on the moon, the tracings of a cloud, the flames of a fire, each may, according to his fancy, discover the shape of a nose, a mouth, eyes, a human face, or any other fantastic figure. These are veritable illusions which, in the ordinary way, yield to more careful examination, but are also at times very tenacious when we lack means of checking them.

We may draw the conclusion that illusion is only a false interpretation by the imagination of real data furnished by the senses. It always presupposes a real object, but one deformed or transformed by false associations of images, whereas hallucination, having no objective foundation, is entirely imaginary.

Furthermore, hallucination throws out its phantom, like that which comes from a magic-lantern, in every direction it pleases; simple illusion, on the contrary, is inseparable from the object perceived, becomes one with it, can only be localized in it, because it is nothing else than its normal perception, distorted by a false interpretation.

Thanks to this second feature, illusion, easily distinguished theoretically from hallucination, is also distinguished from it practically. Thus the illusory image can never be thrown on to a screen, as can easily be done with an hallucinatory image.

When, then, certain doctors, such as Gratiolet, only see in

these phenomena a difference of degree, we do not hesitate to think that they are wrong, because their psychological and physiological analysis is seriously incomplete. Moreover, there are illusions, as there are hallucinations, of all degrees of intensity, which consequently cannot be a test of distinction.

2. Other writers fail to distinguish *dreams* from hallucination, and in this there is a fresh confusion which it behoves us to make clear.

The dream is essentially the operation of a person who is asleep; and so, to define hallucination as the "dream of one who is awake," as has been done, is as contradictory as to speak of a square circle or a round triangle. The metaphor is perhaps brilliant, but it is void of reality.

In order to be convinced of this we must remember first that sleep is the repose of the faculties of relation for the benefit of the faculties of nutrition, whose activity is then doubled in order to rebuild the exhausted organism. This benumbing is progressive: the outward senses are first closed, then the inward senses—memory, instinct, consciousness; finally the imagination, which is the last to fall asleep and the first to awake.

Now when it awakes alone, before the other faculties, which are all faculties concerned with the true, with *what is*, that which is imaginary is no longer counterbalanced by what is real, nor even by what is reasonable: we then imagine the unreal and the impossible; such is the phenomenon of the dream. It is the separate working of the imaginative faculty without the concurrence and control of the others.

This simple analysis allows us to note, in passing, how unreasonable it is to wish to admit only that which we imagine, since imagination, being able to feign the unreal and the absurd, has never claimed to be a test of truth. But let us come back to the dream and its difference from hallucination.

Far from finding only an accidental difference between them, we believe it to be essential, and the following are the chief characteristics which distinguish them.

The first and most essential is that in the dream, as we have just seen, the *imagination acts alone*, without the concurrence of the other faculties. It imagines that it sees, hears, walks, flies, but it does none of these. The dreamer is not even able to judge of what he experiences.

Again, the imagination shows him the dead as though they were alive, or the living as though dead; that which is im-

possible as though possible; that which he has never seen as though seen, and he accepts everything without verification. Whereas in hallucination all the internal and external senses—nay, even the judgement and the reason—may collaborate.

This first is a main distinction, but it is obvious that it is not one that can be made by the modern philosophers who, in the wake of Descartes,[1] confuse the perceptions of the external senses with acts of the imagination: also, according to them, all is imaginary and hallucinatory in the operations of sense when man is awake as when he is asleep, and the only difference is that their hallucination is sometimes " true " and sometimes " false," although this cannot be shown with certainty, nor can they be distinguished.

From this fundamental distinction there follow two others, of great importance and easy to experience.

1. In the dream the whole work of imagination takes place in the brain, without external projection, and the projection is purely imaginary. Now we have shown that with hallucination it is the reverse.

2. In the dream illusion is inevitable, whereas in hallucination it is not so.

It is easy to develop these two most interesting distinctions. First, the images of a dream are not projected outwardly like those of hallucination. The object imagined by the dreamer is never located among the real objects where he sleeps, neither to the right nor left of his bed, for instance, nor in any particular spot in the room. It only occupies some vague place also dreamed and imagined, the dimensions and position of which are quite arbitrary and unreal. Pekin may touch Paris; the inhabitants of the moon may converse with those of the earth or jostle the heroes of the *Thousand and One Nights*. If in the dream we imagine ourselves covering distances by walking or flying, these distances are again imaginary.

Now there is nothing like this in hallucination. The

[1] " I see so clearly that there are no certain indications by which it is possible to distinguish certainly between the state of waking and that of sleep, that I am most astonished " (Descartes, *Medit.* I, p. 238, and *Medit.* VI, p. 349). " When I carefully consider," he adds, " what the *imagination* is, I find that it is none other than a certain application of the faculty of knowing to the body which is intimately present to it, and which therefore exists " (*Medit.* VI, p. 322). Taine has only brought into relief the clumsiness of this confusion by seriously defining the perception of the outward senses as a " true hallucination."

phantoms imagined are really thrown either on a screen or on other real objects which surround us, and blend with them: the imaginary is seen side by side with or upon the real.

Thus the tragedian Talma projected his imaginary skeletons on each of his visitors, transforming them in turn into figures in a dance of death. The clairvoyants of Tilly pointed out the trees near which their apparitions arose. The patient of Brierre de Boismont indicated the side of the bath where the black man appeared to him, the distances in the room that he covered, as also the hole in the stove through which he disappeared. And all these distances and dimensions may be measured by means of common instruments: this is not possible in a dream.

And if the externalization of hallucination is real, it must call into play the outward senses which remain at rest in the dream. Their mechanism, therefore, is not the same and the distinction of their natures is clear on this first head.

The second contrast is no less decisive. The mind of the dreamer is always the victim of an illusion, because he is unable to draw a distinction between fiction and reality. In order to distinguish two terms they must be compared. Now in the dream one of the two is absent, since in it the senses are suspended, and the realities which they enable us to perceive have vanished from our eyes and all our senses. The mind then, unable to compare or judge or direct, ceases to be master of itself or to be responsible.

It is, though passing and of normal duration, a veritable alienation. The imagination, that will-o'-the-wisp, is the only guide. Hence the limitless extravagances of the dream. In hallucination, on the contrary, it is possible to distinguish between the real and the imaginary: the two terms of it are face to face, since the hallucinatory image is upon or side by side with the realities around us.

Perceiving the two phenomena together, their contrast cannot fail to appear striking to the eyes of any waking man, healthy of mind, calm enough and sufficiently master of himself coolly to judge of what he experiences. He can even recognise his state without being its dupe. Aided by experience, with the help of a wise director, he will little by little become familiar with so strange a phenomenon, and far from being disturbed by it, he will in certain cases wait patiently until the crisis has passed.

But if, on the contrary, he should lose his calm and cool-

headedness, if he does not know how to protect himself against the persistent obsession of the phantom which seems to pursue him, this abdication of reason, which releases the reins of government and submits, is a veritable delirium, an act or state of madness, as it remains for us to explain.

3. What, then, is *delirium*, and how does it differ from the other phenomena of dream, illusion, and hallucination, which we have just been studying?

Delirium is not merely an accidental error of judgement, such as would be a sophistical reasoning made in good faith; it is a disturbance of the imagination which brings about a disturbance of the reason and an inability sanely to judge of what one meets with, during the whole period of a passing morbid crisis.

Should this crisis become habitual or chronic, it would take the name of alienation or madness, so that it has been well said that passing delirium is an accidental madness.

This passing aberration of the mind is due to the over-excitement, also passing, of the imagination, in virtue of the principle that the activity of the soul is not excited at one point without being proportionately diminished at another. The balance of our faculties is thus disturbed and the reason becomes subject to the consequence of its dependence on the senses. In the normal state these are useful to the reason; during the crisis they dominate it and do it harm.

In order thus to tyrannize over it, the imagination does not require to unsettle the external senses and provoke in them hallucinations or false externalizations of images. There may be delirium either with or without hallucinations.

Here are some instances, which might be multiplied indefinitely:

In an access of fever the delirious patient believes himself turned into a beast, a dog, a wolf, a serpent, or into some fragile material. Gratiolet speaks of one who thought his legs were wisps of straw, unable to bear him. Aristotle cites the case of one of his countrymen who thought he had become a jug of water and lived in continual alarm lest he should be broken or spilt on the ground.

Alexander of Tralles says that he had seen a woman who dared not bend her thumb for fear that the world would crumble. Esquirol tells of a merchant who, having met with some slight losses, thought himself ruined; and, believing himself unable

to pay for his food, refused to eat. An endeavour was made to deceive him by showing him his books with plenty of profits. For a moment he seemed to be convinced of his mistake, but soon after his delirium began again; he kept to his determination to die of hunger.

An Anglican minister having accidentally swallowed the wax seal of a letter, someone said to him in joke: " There! For the future your bowels will be sealed!" Immediately this absurd idea took hold of the minister's mind, and at the end of two days he resolutely refused all food, feeling convinced that he could not pass it. In short, there is no extravagance, no matter how strange or foolish it may be, which cannot, in a moment of delirium, lay hold of the poor human brain, as soon as it ceases to be guided by the reason. It then becomes no more than a disordered machine lacking balance or control.

But let it be well noted that this wandering of the reason is essentially different from hallucination, which may be only a wandering of the imagination and the senses, and co-exist, as we have shown, with self-mastery and rectitude of judgement.

Nevertheless, as we willingly admit, self-mastery during troubles of the imagination is rather rare, owing to the weakness of will-power in most men; and delirium, whilst remaining clearly distinct from hallucination, very often follows it.

Esquirol reports that a young man, going out one evening, had a vision of the head of a corpse, and heard these words: " Thou shalt die in thirty-six hours." Believing it to be a heavenly warning, without being distressed, he made an act of Christian resignation at his sentence, put his affairs in order, and waited patiently for death . . . which did not come.

It is obvious that this young man had an hallucination of sight or hearing, but was there in his case the least delirium? Not at all. Faith in divine Providence, still so widespread, is sufficient to explain his conduct: there was a mistake on his part, but no access of madness. What he had thought possible was indeed so.

On the contrary, another patient sees during the night a corpse by his bedside. Terrified, he gets up: seizing the corpse in his arms he puts it outside and carefully closes the door. A moment later the corpse returns and comes to lie down on his bed. Again the patient contends with it and thrusts the horrible vision out. It quickly returns, and the struggle goes on until daylight.

In this case hallucination is complicated by delirium. As

a matter of fact, nothing would be easier than to make the judgement that corpses do not walk, that they do not pass through doors or enter into struggles with the living. Yet the unfortunate patient was incapable of such elementary reasoning, so disturbed was he at such a frightful vision—that is to say, he was delirious. His delirium, however, was none the less distinct from his hallucination.

We may now conclude this account by a short *summary* of the four elements before us, the contrast between which will become more clear.

1. The sufferer from *illusion* sees a real object which he distorts or transforms through a false association of images: an ordinary shadow becomes a monster.

2. The *dreamer* sees no real object, for his eyes are closed and his senses lulled; he only contemplates the internal fictions of a wandering imagination.

3. The sufferer from *delirium* talks nonsense, with or without hallucination, but always under the influence of a foolish imagination that is master of the situation.

4. The sufferer from *hallucination* sees a phantom which he carries with him in his eyes or other outward senses, and throws outwards, upon or beside the realities which surround him.

Hallucination, then, has its seat in the five external senses, disturbed by the violence of the imagination. The cerebral images, leaving the outward organs to be preserved in the store of the memory, seem then to retrace their steps—more or less modified and combined by the fancy—and to excite these senses afresh, as in consecutive images, in order to feign normal perceptions. Clumsy counterfeits, as we have seen, which can easily be distinguished.

Delirium has its seat in the mind, whose judgement is disturbed and scattered, whilst the imagination, in a state of over-excitement, makes it lose its balance.

The dream has its seat in the imagination alone, all the other senses or faculties being asleep.

Finally, simple illusion has its seat in a false association of images, wrongly interpreting and distorting an object normally perceived.

It is enough to have once brought into the light all these clear and precise notions—to which many writers bring only difficulty and confusion—to anticipate that they possess important apologetic consequences, which we shall now endeavour to draw.

§ 7

Application of tests of hallucination

Having thus cleared the ground of all the false notions which encumbered it, we return to the *objections raised by unbelievers* against supernatural visions, and examine their bearing.

They say that all the visions of our canonized saints can be nothing more than hallucinations. Now of the three kinds of visions which we have described—*outward* visions, *imaginary* visions, and *intellectual* visions—it is clear that two of these are not at stake, and cannot even come within the scope of the objection.

Outward vision alone can be suspected of being hallucinatory—that is, of being a false externalization of an inward image. This is what remains to discuss, but we must from the start consider as out of the question either imaginary vision or intellectual vision, which, taking place entirely within the intelligence or the imagination, without any outward projection of a phantom, and without any confusion with the real objects which surround us, cannot be suspected of being hallucinatory.

The tests which we have established in order to distinguish imaginary or intellectual visions, natural and supernatural, true and false, cannot then be upset by an objection which does not embrace them.

Thus, for instance, if these visions reveal to us future events, which, humanly speaking, it is impossible to foresee; or present events outside and beyond human capacity; or again if they teach us truths or facts above the natural scope of our minds; if they communicate to us an infused theological, historical, geographical, or other science, such as the gift of tongues and the understanding of them without having learnt them; it is clear that such visions are supernatural, and that hallucination, with which it is claimed to contrast them, must be merely a high-sounding phrase void of sense.

There remain, then, *external visions*. It is on them, once again, that discussion should be concentrated. Is it possible to distinguish them clearly from hallucinations? If so, the objections of unbelievers lose all their force. Now we maintain that, at least occasionally, this can be done, and this we think can be easily shown.

We have already met with a great number of *distinctive signs* which can enable us to direct and conclude an inquiry as to pretended visions. It will be enough for us to show their practical application. With a view to an orderly statement of them we shall arrange them in three groups—the physiological signs, the intellectual signs, and the moral signs.

I. *Physiological signs*

For the sake of clearness let us take a concrete case, that of a seer who claims to have seen an apparition of the Blessed Virgin, not in her mind, but before her, on a rock, fifty yards away.

If she is able to check the vision by means of the other senses, especially that of touch, and verify her own testimony by that of those around her, there is no longer any doubt: the vision is real. Thus our risen Lord, when he appeared to the disciples, made them verify sight by touch and the testimony of each by that of all: *Palpate et videte: quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habent* ("Handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have").[1] There could be nothing more decisive for every man with common sense.

The difficulty begins when this double check is found to be impossible or is tried without result. For instance, if the apparition wills to show itself to one seer alone, not to several; or if it be accessible to one alone of the outward senses, such as that of sight, unverified by that of touch. Then we are forced to have recourse to other tests, to those which we have already deduced from our study of the nature and mechanism of hallucination.

If the image of the Virgin in question is hallucinatory—that is to say, created by the imagination of one seer and projected externally by the eyes—nothing is easier than to prove it scientifically, in accordance with the theories which we have already formulated respecting the consecutive or hallucinatory image, which we now propose to apply.

1. *Laws of projection.*—The most simple and at the same time the most decisive experiment is that of the *screen.* By means of this, Dr. Bernheim, of Nancy, and in Paris our revered friend Dr. Ferrand, of the Hôtel-Dieu, easily discovered the delusion of some hysterical women sufferers from hallucination. It consists, as will be remembered, in placing a screen between

[1] *Luc.* xxiv 39.

the eyes of the seer and the spot at which she claims to see the vision at a certain distance. If the vision is then found to be intercepted and suspended, the object seen is real and the vision authenticated.

If, on the contrary, there is hallucination, the vision will continue, with the noticeable feature that the image projected on the screen will increase in size in the eyes of the seer if the screen be moved further off, and will be diminished if the screen be brought nearer, and if it be inclined the image will become elongated; whilst a real image painted on the screen will appear smaller at a distance, larger when nearer, and foreshortened if inclined. The contrast between the hallucinatory or subjective and the real and objective vision becomes evident, and the experiment is conclusive.

2. *Laws of dependence on the organs.*—If the image be hallucinatory it is subjective: within the eye, on which it depends. So in shutting the eyes the seer ought still to see it, and on moving the eyes or the head the image ought to move and be thrown in every direction with the look.

In normal vision, on the other hand, a real, objective apparition can no longer be seen if the eyes are closed or turned away from it. Thus Bernadette ceased to see the image of the Virgin at the grotto at Lourdes when she lowered her eyes; and it is stated that during the apparition at Portmain the little child, carried in the arms of its mother, stretched out its little hands towards the Lady that appeared when it was turned in her direction, and ceased its cries of joy and its gestures when turned away. This, if authentic, is enough to show scientifically that the child was not the dupe of hallucination.

On the contrary, with the clairvoyants of Tilly, the apparition followed the direction of their look. One of them, Louise Polinière, having bent her head backwards until it touched her back—in a cataleptic crisis producing circular contraction—her regard always followed the vision, in spite of this singular position of the head. Hallucination was thus made clear.

Dependence on the organ is much more manifest when the image projected by the eye appears only little by little, and when it is reflected on the transparent cornea of the seer, as we have already explained in the Tilly case (pp. 358-9).

We will not, however, insist on these last tests because of their practical difficulties. Thus, the examination requires that the spectator be in the angle of incidence of the luminous rays; the image to be visible must be in a relatively dark environ-

ment; it must also be sent out with sufficient projective force; its smallness demands very close inspection or a binocular, and so on. So many difficult conditions are beyond the common scope and can only be properly fulfilled by specialists. Observations of this nature then will rarely be conclusive, but the experiment with the screen will cut short all doubt.

3. *Nature of the projected image.*—The hallucinatory image is distinguished above all by its transparence, its colour, and its light. Now the proof of this is easy. Like all so-called *real* images in physical science, it is vaporous and transparent, like a very fine gauze floating in space, through which all other objects can be seen. It is therefore easy to ask the seer if the object contemplated is transparent, and even sometimes to find out by various experiments whether he or she can see through it. Thus Talma clearly saw and recognized his visitors through his phantom skeleton.

The colour of the hallucinatory image is also characteristic. As noted by experimenters such as Gratiolet, it is rarely red or blue. It is only red in cases of epileptic hallucination. In the ordinary way it is the colour of fire or phosphorus, or irised like mother-of-pearl, or of the lustre of shining silver. Again, the phosphorescent glimmer is vacillating and variable, continuously growing or decreasing. Finally, the colour is subject to the curious laws of contrast and of complementary colours. Thus, by contrast, the light parts become dark and the dark become light. The red image examined on a green screen becomes purple, orange on a blue screen, yellow on an indigo, and so on, in accordance with the well-known law. It is obvious that all these phenomena definitely show the subjective accidents of the retina, of which we have spoken in connection with consecutive images—that is, that they are the certain mark, not of an objective and normal vision, but of one that is purely subjective and hallucinatory.

The abnormal way in which these phantasmagoric images are illuminated is again a noteworthy index. The distribution of light and shade is in no way conformable to what it ought to be in the case of a really outside object illuminated by the sun or by a lamp. Thus the image is lighted on the right when the sun or the lamp is on the left, and *vice versa*. Or again, as most often happens, it is uniformly lighted without regard to the position of the external light.

" A person of my acquaintance," relates Fr. de Bonniot, " frequently, during the night, saw a heap of green peas, perfectly

round, of a pale green, but uniformly lighted, as though transparent, whatever the position of the lamp." The unreality of such objects is betrayed thus by their false illumination: they are only hallucinations produced by the phosphorescence of the retina and lighted thereby.

That is why the outward light, especially the full light of the sun, far from illuminating them more, makes them fade, and, more often still, destroys and extinguishes them. Hence the well-known proverb, "Phantoms fear the light." Night and silence are always conducive to them, and occasionally even indispensable. This fact is well known; among the very numerous cases collected in the works of specialists, none will be found in which the luminous phantom adapts itself to the conditions of the external light, like real objects lightened by the sun.

In the same way that the night favours hallucinations of sight, so also does the silence and solitude of the night those of hearing. "Hallucinations of hearing," says Calmeil "present a faint or even intermittent character during the day, to reappear with greater or less intensity at night. Such and such a sufferer, who is calm whilst the sun shines, never sees the approach of night without certain forebodings, persuaded that the same distressing feelings which affected him the night before will be repeated during the coming night."

4. *Independence of the laws of the real*, in hallucinatory images, is no less characteristic than is their transparence, colour, and illumination. Whilst the real beings of nature are subject to constant laws, which no human power is able to suspend, and depend first of all on the essential conditions of the possible or impossible, hallucinatory phantoms are always exempt from them: they are more often than not in opposition to the laws of reality, sometimes even to an extravagant and ridiculous extent.

Such, then, is the proper character of hallucination, and, among the numberless facts related by different writers, hardly a single exception is known. We give here some examples.

The grandfather of Charles Bonnet used to see figures of men and women, animals and houses, in front of him. . . . Now, these figures came nearer, moved away, increased or diminished in size at a glance, and all this happened in complete silence. That men or animals should move thus without any noise is sufficiently improbable, but that houses should do the same,

and that all these objects should grow larger or smaller at a glance, is beyond all limit and discovers the unreal.

No less unreal are the vaults of death, built with the living heads of men and animals with ominous looks, with which horrible vision Dr. Savigny was pursued for twenty years. Every law of biological or of simple physical reality proclaims them to be fantastic and hallucinatory.

Brierre de Boismont cites the case of a lady—doubtless an instance of hemiplegia—who saw in her hallucinations only halves of faces or profiles or eyes alone. Sometimes she saw one of her own eyes dragged out and flying before her. . . .

The same writer cites the story of a widow lady about eighty-one years of age, whose husband, who had been dead for six years, is ever present to her eyes, being, however, only one foot and a half in height. He wanders over roofs, on walls and in the streets: he calls out to her and complains of feeling cold because he is naked or has had nothing to eat. She answers him with moaning, weeping, and shrieking; she gives the order for water, wine, soup, and clothing to be brought to him. Sometimes he shows himself to her headless, or as a head without a body, provided with wings.

Those suffering from hallucination love above all to bring back the dead and talk with them.

The painter Blake held conversation with Michelangelo and dined with Semiramis. The famous people of antiquity visited him in turn and begged him to paint their portraits. He also prepared a large collection of sketches of these celebrities. Portraits of Beelzebub himself and his mother were to be found in this collection.

Hallucinations do not stop at the most unlikely enormities. The geometrical conditions of space, the laws of weight, those of the diffusion of sound or light, of reflection or refraction, and so on, are commonly violated without restraint and in a most irrational way.

There is an instance cited of an old soldier thinking himself to be a giant, and witnessing battles between Lilliputians fought round his great toe. Another patient saw ships sailing on the walls of his room, on the curtains of his bed, in the plates on his table, and in the flames of the fire.

Now there is nothing of all this extravagance in normal vision of the real; still less in supernatural visions. Likelihood, harmony, order, and respect for the laws of reality are everywhere found in them.

5. Finally, the *influence of the will of the patient or of the experimenter* on the progress of the vision is the last sign of its hallucinatory character. A truly decisive sign, though it may fail, or escape the observer. We know, in fact, that normal visions of the real, still more divine visions, like all mystical gifts, are essentially passive and independent of the will.

Now we have already seen that certain hallucinations may be let loose by hypnotic suggestion or by auto-suggestion. This is enough to show them to be false visions.

Auto-suggestion is doubtless more difficult to bring to light, but cases have none the less been well authenticated. Under the influence of violent emotion, of a desire or a fear which maddens, it is possible to see or hear what is hoped for or feared, and by repetition of the crises, facility to reproduce the vision at will may be acquired, just as certain women have the gift of weeping at will. The visions of Newton, Pascal, Talma, and many others are striking examples. So true is it, as La Fontaine said, that " We easily believe that which we fear or hope for."

By changing but one word the fabulist might have written: " We easily *see* that which we fear or hope for." The application of this principle is most instructive. Thus, when Bernadette went to the Grotto of the apparitions and remained there a long time without seeing anything, or returned thence without having seen anything, she gave a proof that her visions were not the mere product of an imagination suffering from hallucination.

After having released the hallucination, the will may often succeed in directing it. For this the character and life, as well as the habits and the preoccupation of the patient at the time, must be known, in order to find a means of penetrating his fancy and directing it by suggestion. For instance, if it is a case of an old soldier, a lover of his calling, it will suffice to place a stick, shaped like a gun, in his hand to change the course of his delusion by awakening warlike images in his mind. Suddenly he will feign some warlike scene or military exercise. If, instead of a soldier, you are experimenting on a pious young girl, it is enough, during the crisis, to join her hands in order to induce an outpouring of prayer, or some religious act such as imaginary communion.

By placing before the subject differently coloured glasses it is possible to awaken corresponding hallucinations: red glass

will call up visions of blood, murder, and fire; yellow glass visions of bright sun, gaiety, and so forth.

All these experiments have become classical in the clinics of La Salpêtrière and Nancy, with this difference, that in the school of Charcot hallucination is controlled by physical and sensible means, whilst at Nancy the school of Bernheim only makes use of the direct suggestion of an idea; the method which they call "psychical" means by verbal suggestion—a method which seems to succeed with disconcerting ease. It is therefore relatively easy, in the case of a visionary willing to lend himself to the experiment, to show by this last means the morbid and hallucinatory nature of the pretended vision. If it can be provoked or directed at will, it is clear that it has nothing to do with the mystical gifts of God.

Such are the five chief physiological tests, the application of which will distinguish hallucination from real vision. Their primary importance in conducting a medical or canonical inquiry as well as their practical efficacy are thus brought to light.

How poor, on the contrary, and how useless is the subjectivist and *Cartesian theory* which can only discover accidental differences such as the greater or less "connection of ideas" and "likelihood" between real vision and dream or hallucination: a purely negative and most insufficient differentiation; for there may be, at least exceptionally, strong "connection" and "likelihood" in hallucination. Christian apologetics would thus be stripped of its most powerful and strongest weapons. But there are still better in reserve, which we shall go on to review.

II. *Intellectual signs*

Physiological tests have enabled us to distinguish real and objective visions from hallucination. Tests of the intellectual order, by enabling us to establish the *transcendence* or supranatural character of real visions, are a still greater guarantee against all suspicion of their being hallucinatory.

The principle which must guide us in seeking these new signs is this: when an extraordinary vision obviously surpasses the natural scope of the sensible and intellectual faculties of the seer, it cannot certainly be a morbid and hallucinatory crisis. It is indeed clear that a pathological fact again belongs

to the natural order, and that to a phenomenon that is above nature a supranatural cause must be assigned.

Let rationalists protest as they will, talk of superstition, of ignorance, and of the Middle Ages, or appeal to modern progress, there is something stronger than all this scorn, and that is logic. Science cannot protest, or even raise its voice, against the power of logic. Therefore if we show that the transcendence, whether absolute or relative, of certain visions is indisputable, we shall be justified in concluding that they are true visions of the supranatural order and not hallucinations.

Now in order to establish this transcendence, to show the limits beyond which the imagination, and consequently the hallucinatory vision, cannot go, we must first call to mind the *fundamental principle* recognized by all psychologists and all scholars:

The imagination reproduces; in reproducing it combines; but it cannot create.

It is to the imagination that the famous axiom may be applied literally, that there is nothing in the mind which has not come through the senses: *Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu.* Where is the man born blind who is able to imagine colour; the man born deaf who can imagine sound? For the man born deaf or blind this would be a work not of reproduction but of creation, and one impossible for him to perform.

De Maistre somewhere speaks of a blind man who after much seeking imagined that scarlet was like the shrill sound of a trumpet, and sky blue like the soft sound of the flute—nor would it be impossible for someone born deaf to make the reverse discovery by picturing to himself violent sounds by vivid red and melodious sounds by sky blue—but all this impotent effort of a tortured imagination only brings the intangible principle into better relief: the imagination reproduces what has already been seen by the senses, but it cannot create.

It is true it sometimes manifests a *wonderful power* in these reproductions. Taine[1] cites the instance of a young girl of twenty-five, very ignorant, not even knowing how to read, who, falling ill, recited long pieces of Latin, Greek, and rabbinical Hebrew, without understanding them. On making inquiry it was found that at the age of nine she had been sheltered by her uncle, a learned clergyman, who after dinner was accustomed to walk about declaiming his favourite pieces. On reference to his books it was discovered that these pieces

[1] *De l'intelligence*, vol. i, p. 150.

were recited word for word by this young girl in an access of delirium.

Brierre de Boismont[1] cites another instance no less remarkable; that of a young child of seven, who during sleep imitated musical sounds identical with those of a small violin. Now it was found that this poor child, who had no taste for music, had been obliged to sleep for some months in a farm, next to the room of a travelling musician who spent his nights playing the violin. The stock-pieces of this wretched musician were spontaneously engraved on the brain of the child, as on the wax of a graphophone; and the paroxysm of fever released them and enabled them to be rolled off automatically. These facts, which might be multiplied, however wonderful they may be, are nevertheless instances of repetition only and not of creation; so certain is it that imagination does not create.

It is true that it is sometimes called *creative*, but only by way of flattery and metaphor. Under the sway of reason, which orders, which refers effects back to their causes, or of the inventive genius, it may, indeed, elaborate images which, at first sight, may seem altogether new. But on carefully examining them it is soon found that all the elements of such images were derived from earlier sensations, and that their combination alone is new, receding more or less from the real towards the ideal. The guidance of the idea or feeling, moreover, is indispensable for raising the imagination to the expression of new conceptions. It then becomes the great instrument of progress in industry, science, or art.

When, on the contrary, it is not controlled by idea or feeling, but left to itself, the imagination proves to be lamentably impotent. It is unable to rise beyond common repetitions, and if it should attempt new combinations they are disordered and ridiculous. This is why the sufferer from hallucination is at times so inventively poor, at others wildly extravagant. As reason no longer governs the working of the imagination, images are only called up by fever, delirium, and the nervous emotions which disturb the reason. It would be a miracle if, under such conditions, the images evolved were perfectly reasonable and harmonious, much less fraught with genius or creative. Consequently if the object of a vision is perfectly regular and reasonable, without any extravagant, irrational, or fantastic features; if it is not purely and simply the reproduction of some external thing known to the seer; if it expresses some supra-

[1] *De l'intelligence*, p. 342.

sensible ideal, we have already a strong presumption that it is not the fruit of hallucination. And if this ideal surpasses the things known by the seer even in the normal state, still more if it lies beyond the mental scope of the most learned, then its transcendence is manifest.

Among the *instances* which naturally suggest themselves to our mind, let us cite that of the apparition of the Immaculate Conception at Lourdes. Here we have a poor little shepherdess of the Pyrenees, without knowledge or education, with nothing remarkable about her unless it be her ignorance and frankness. She only knows the common forms of Christian prayer, and even these she repeats without well grasping their meaning. Nor has she ever paid a visit to the galleries nor seen the religious masterpieces of Raphael or Michelangelo.

Now, one day, in a heavenly vision, which was afterwards repeated twenty times, there appeared to her a wonderful image of the Queen of Heaven. The grace, the purity, the holiness, the gentleness, the supernatural beauty of her face, all, even to the graceful simplicity of her royal robe, surpassed the genius of the greatest painters to depict. She found it quite impossible to describe faithfully what she saw: all the most beautiful representations of it which were shown to this child, she judged unequal and much inferior to the ideal beauty that appeared to her. Well! How can we suppose for an instant that this perfectly artistic conception could be the product, the creation of this poor little shepherdess ?

But if the ideal beauty of the picture surpassed the mental grasp of this ignorant girl, the understanding of the mysterious and deep meaning of this vision is entirely beyond her. The Virgin had said to Bernadette: *I am the Immaculate Conception.* Now this expression was so new to this young girl that on returning to the dwelling of the parish priest, all along the way she repeated the answer of the Lady so that she might not forget it. She herself declared this.

Furthermore, in the afternoon of that day, as M. Estrade, one of the witnesses, relates, " my sister and I received a visit from Bernadette. She reproduced for us the scene of the morning, repeating to us the words of the apparition. She said *con-shep-tion.* We had to teach her to pronounce the word. She asked us with great simplicity the meaning of this expression. She realized that the expression applied to the Blessed Virgin, but did not understand the literal meaning." So much the more, we would add, did she not understand the

depth of this theological formula, nor the timeliness of a revelation agreeing so well with the recent definition by the Church of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Bernadette, then, could not have invented any of this: neither the picture of ideal beauty, nor the theological formula nor its wonderful appropriateness. All that she had seen and heard surpassed the natural scope of the imagination as of the mind of this poor shepherdess. The transcendence of this vision is thus shown, also its non-hallucinatory character.

Still more astonishing and yet more simple is the same demonstration of transcendence in several other no less authentic cases, in which the vision is directed towards completely inaccessible objects, past, future, or present.

Thus when St Jane Chantal, before having ever seen St Francis de Sales, beheld in spirit, or in a vision, the saintly Bishop of Geneva, with his height, lineaments, gestures, features and their expression, this could certainly not have been an imaginary reproduction of some previous interview, since none had ever taken place, and imagination is not capable of reproducing accurately the traits of an unknown person. It is unreasonable, then, to take this vision for an hallucination. The same must be said of the apparition of the Venerable Mère Agnès de Langeac to M. Olier: a vision so clear that he was able to recognize her at once when he saw her for the first time at the Monastery of Langeac.

In these examples the object of the vision is a present though inaccessible fact; it may also be something in the future, and thus give a new proof of its transcendence. The vision of a fact to come which it is impossible to foresee would be a genuine prophecy, the verification of which would be so startling a proof of its transcendence that it seems unnecessary to insist on this.

Let us rather deal with a fact that is past, and inaccessible to the seer, and show by citing an instance that it may be an obvious proof of transcendence, assuming that it is historically true.

Anne Catherine Emmerich, in one of the numerous visions which unfolded to her the life of the Blessed Virgin, saw the house which Mary occupied near Ephesus, during the last years of her life, and wherein she died. She gave a very minute description both of the dwelling and of the surrounding places, which was published in the *Life of the Blessed Virgin*, in accordance with the revelations of Catherine.

These details went for a long time unnoticed. Very much later—in November, 1890—some Lazarist Fathers of Smyrna conceived the idea of making researches in the neighbourhood of Ephesus, being assisted therein by certain topographical indications contained in that book, and were fortunate enough to end by discovering this house of the Blessed Virgin, all the details of which corresponded with the description given by Catherine Emmerich. A written statement by Mgr. Timoni, Archbishop of Smyrna, and accounts given by most competent explorers such as Fr. Eschbach, Superior of the French Seminary at Rome, have vouched for the striking identity of the place and the ruins, and this is confirmed by local tradition, which from time immemorial has called the house " Panaghia Capouli," or the Gate of the Virgin.

Now it is clear that the object of this vision was beyond the natural scope of the mind of a poor girl of Westphalia, without education, who had never travelled out of her province, such as was Catherine Emmerich. The transcendence is thus manifest, and hallucination admittedly impossible.

The supernatural character of a vision, however, may again be shown *indirectly*, by the transcendence of the circumstances which accompany it or the effects which follow it. For example, if it is authenticated by some miracle, it is a sign that it comes from above. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, the vision of tongues of fire coming down from heaven on the heads of the apostles, showed its heavenly source by miraculous effects, such as the gift of tongues.

The same is shown when the visions of ecstatics are accompanied by phenomena that contradict natural laws, such as flight in the air or levitation, which raise the ecstatic from the ground and keep him thus suspended, in contradiction to the laws of gravity; or are accompanied by the miracle of incombustibility of the body, as happened to Bernadette in ecstasy, when she held a candle in her hand, the flame of which burnt the fingers without any pain or organic injury, and so on. So also, if the apparition itself speaks or acts, it may choose and give a sign as proof of its supernatural reality. It was thus that the Virgin of Lourdes caused the miraculous spring to burst forth. Although indirect, these tests of the transcendence of a vision and of its non-hallucinatory character, are none the less unanswerable.

III. *Moral signs*

After the physiological tests which distinguish objective vision from that which is unreal and hallucinatory, and the intellectual tests that show its transcendence and supranatural character, come the moral tests which show whether the supernatural source be good or bad, divine or diabolical. Thus are completed our method and means of research in a medical and canonical inquiry concerning pretended visions.

We assume it granted, first of all, that the *devil* can intervene, not only to produce imaginary phantoms within, but also outwardly so as to bring about either hallucinations or true visions of real objects which, out of malice, he may cause to appear. It is the constant teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church that the devil has the power to transform himself into an angel of light, and that he has dared more than once to assume the sensible appearance of our Lord or the Blessed Virgin or the saints. There are numberless instances which bear witness to this: they are especially striking in the life of St Antony written by St Athanasius, that of St Benedict by St Gregory the Great, and many others.

Among recent occurrences of the nineteenth century, it is enough to call to mind the apparitions and other diabolical delusions of Pierre-Michel Ventras, at Tilly (Calvados), and their condemnation by Gregory XVI in 1843. Moreover, we shall come back to this teaching of the Church in order to defend it against different aspects of rationalistic liberalism which have a tendency to glide into the minds of some Christians.

It is enough for our purpose here to point out the signs which distinguish the divine supernatural from its diabolical counterfeits. Now these signs belonging to the moral order are drawn from three principal sources—the *person* of the seer, the *mode* of the vision, and the *effects* which it produces.

1. *The person of the seer.*—There is no age, nor sex, nor reputable profession that is excluded *a priori* from the gifts of God, especially from the grace of heavenly vision: if there are any that are privileged they are little children, on account of their frankness and innocence, young men and maidens of virgin purity, and also old men whose age renders them more calm and free from human passion. The prophet Joel seems to bear witness to this in his words recalled by St Luke: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord,

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams."[1]

Women themselves are not excluded from these signal favours; there are numerous and famous instances to prove it. The annals of our saints are filled with such instances, so that we even find the number of women seers unquestionably in excess of that of men. It would seem that, woman being unable to exercise the sacerdotal ministry in the Church, or even to teach publicly, God has wished to compensate her by often granting her very special supernatural enlightenment, which enables her, in a private and purely unofficial manner, to perform an equivalent role, assuring her of immense influence. Such, for example, was the inspired mission of St Catherine of Siena to Pope Gregory XI. It is, however, no less certain—and the witness of all mystical writers, including St Teresa, is unanimous on this point—that the number of women deceived by the illusions of their imagination or of the devil is much greater than that of men; one might even say, without exaggeration, that the greater number of falls notorious in the Church have been due to sentimental or visionary women.

This also is the theory of Fr. de Saint-Jure, who has written a most significant passage on this subject. "It is the artifice of the devil," he writes, "to address himself to the sex which he knows is the less armed against his ruses, and by this means to overreach the other, which otherwise he would not succeed in doing so easily. He thus seduced Adam through Eve. In this way the devil and the heresiarchs have commonly, as St Jerome remarks, made use of women whom they said were animated by the Holy Ghost, such as Simon Magus his Helen, Apelles his Philomena, Severus another of the same name, Montanus his two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, who possessed the power of gammoning the most learned man of the time, Tertullian, with their false visions and revelations; plunging his great lights into the darkness of most grievous error, even after he had written the truth concerning them very learnedly; so that the words of Ecclesiasticus may be applied to him: *Mulieres apostatare faciunt sapientes.*"[2]

Prudence, then, is needful with regard to women visionaries, but this reserve would be greatly exaggerated if it went so far as systematic contempt. Before condemning them, they must

[1] *Act.* ii 17.

[2] *L'Homme spirituel*, bk. i, ch. xi.

be put to the proof; above all, to the decisive proof of humility; for, as Benedict XIV observes in his masterly treatise on the *Canonization of Saints:* "The deceits and illusions of women are not maintained for long, if they are carefully subjected to the trial of a deep humility, without which foundation their structure of wonders will quickly crumble."[1] St Teresa, who so often warns her sisters against these pretended raptures or ecstasies, which are "no true raptures, but some natural weakness that may occur to people of delicate constitutions, such as women,"[2] does not scruple to give them also this unfailing test of holy humility. "I look upon it as a most certain truth," she tells them, "that the devil will never deceive, and that God will not suffer him to deceive, the soul which has *no confidence whatever in itself* . . . seeking for further light on this side and on that. . . . Nevertheless, Satan has many devices; and so there is nothing more certain than that it is safer to be afraid, and always on our guard, under a learned director, from whom nothing is concealed. If we do this, no harm can befall us."[3]

In spite of the weakness of their sex, truly humble women are therefore in no way excluded from the favour of divine visions; one class alone of human beings is inexorably barred; that is the unworthy and evildoers. Unless, indeed, occasionally and very rarely, God wills to convert them and make of them vessels of election, as happened to Saul on the road to Damascus; or the general good of the Church justifies such an exception. Thus Pharao, Balaam, Balthazar had divine visions, but it was for the good of the people of God that they took place, and not as a favour granted to these unworthy men.

Never, let us repeat, has such a favour been granted to one unworthy as such, or intending to remain so. This is why the alleged revelations of apostates or heresiarchs, who have revolted against divine authority—such as Luther, or Zwingli with his black and white phantoms; Herman, or the wretched Hacket, who in the sixteenth century wished to pass himself off as the Messiah—and many other impostors or sufferers from hallucination, do not even deserve examination: they are unworthy of heavenly visions.

Without being so obviously unworthy, other seers, who, far from being humble, virtuous, pure, or vowed to a perfect life, appear flippant, worldly, more or less unbalanced, unedifying, and little worthy of the holiness of God, must also be set

[1] *De can. sanct.*, bk. iii, ch. li, n. 3. [2] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.
[3] *Life*, ch. xxv.

aside: they cannot be either agents or instruments of heaven, but more likely of the devil. But among the faults which may make us unworthy of divine vision there is one which we must point out more particularly: it is the *desire* to be favoured with it. Whether this desire is born of an unhealthy yearning for ostentation or vain display, or even only of sincere but ill-regulated piety, it should inspire the director with great distrust. It might, indeed, bring about—at least in certain cases—sufficient mental tension to provoke fixed ideas or hallucinations with or without the complicity of the devil. We know that St Monica herself was a momentary victim of this temperamental weakness. Desirous of drawing her son Augustine from the way of perdition, this great soul was imprudent enough to wish for heavenly communications on the subject, and was the victim of her thoughtless zeal. It is St Augustine himself who relates this in his *Confessions*.[1] " She saw," he tells us, " vain and fantastic things, produced by the impatience of the human mind, which she related to me. But this she did without the same trustfulness as when thou, O my God, wert the author of these visions, for she held them in contempt."

On the other hand, it is obvious that the devil may easily profit by these rash dispositions of a soul, even though it be pious, to make it fall into the most serious illusions. Thus, Benedict XIV severely censures such desires. " These desires," he says, " cannot be found without the taint of some pride and presumption, for it is a wish to tempt God and his Providence."[2]

But if these secret desires are blameworthy and enough to show in advance that should a vision follow it cannot be divine —for God cannot perform miracles in answer to culpable desires—what is to be said of those who make a parade of them, announcing beforehand marvellous seances public or private ? What of spiritist practices, which have as their avowed object the calling up of apparitions of the dead or of the absent living, and openly declare their claim to put themselves in touch with the invisible world ? If, among the preternatural marvels that are attributed to these notorious mediums, some are authentic—which it would be difficult to deny—it is clear that they cannot be divine, but purely diabolical.

2. *The mode of the vision* is the second sign which enables us to judge of its origin, good or bad, divine or diabolical.

[1] *Conf.*, bk. vi, ch. xxiii. [2] *De can. sanct.* ,bk. iii, ch. lii, n. 6, 7.

First of all, its *dignity*. All that comes from God bears the stamp of decency and worthiness. The angel whom he sent to Tobias assumed the figure of a young man of noble bearing whose words were always useful and grave. The contrast with our modern *angels* in the drawing-rooms, who prophesy in crambo and doggerel, or behave unbecomingly on the platforms of our fairs, is enough to prove that they have no divine mission. The mere frequency of their prophetic sayings should be a warning to us. Their *multiloquium* or babbling without discretion or measure, is an imperfection often condemned in Holy Writ.[1]

In the second place, a vision of divine origin is recognized by its *goodness* and *holiness*. Occasionally, however, this essential character is not easy to discern. If the prince of wickedness always declared himself openly, with the malice that belongs to him, the distinction would not be difficult. Good and evil, the divine and the diabolical, would form two categories as clearly distinct as night is from day. Unfortunately it is not so, and the devil does not produce only manifestations that are ridiculous, grotesque, hideous, indecent, malicious, and immoral. Far from that, he cunningly disguises his ugliness and repulsive appearance; he apes God and disguises himself as a good angel—that is to say, as a friend of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Providence, however, cannot allow this resemblance to be perfect; for then we should be fatally led into error. It is for us to be prudent, to observe more closely and with greater attention, and sooner or later we shall see, beneath the cover of this mask, that some of his hideous traits will show themselves. As in the fable, it will not be long before either the end of the ear or tip of the tail of the ugly brute is seen.

On one hand, his pictures of holiness will be more or less clumsy counterfeits, which will always be found to have certain false marks. As Benedict XIV teaches, it will be most often a note of raillery or even of superstition. There have, for instance, been seen magnificent human forms with the feet of a goat. On the other hand, as the end Satan has in view is necessarily to deceive men by seducing their minds or captivating their wills, it will happen sooner or later that he will betray himself in one or other of these ways. Either he will insinuate opinions contrary to the orthodox faith or to the first principles of reason, or else he will incline the will to evil, above

[1] *Prov.* xx 4; *Eccli.* xx 8; *Matth.* vi 7.

all to more or less open rebellion against lawful authority. This tendency to insubordination, to revolt, is the most frequent mark of the rebel angel; an echo of the eternal *non serviam!*

3. *The effects.*—As the tree is known by its fruit, and the seal by its impression, in the end it is by the effects produced in the soul that we should discern the good or evil, divine or diabolical origin of apparitions. Now of these effects there are two kinds: general effects for the human race and for the Church of God, and particular effects on individuals. An apparition with no object, without the slightest use either to the Church or to souls, is surely not from God, who never does anything in vain, either in the natural or the supernatural order.

God cannot even repeat himself uselessly. This is a principle which Canon Brettes has well brought to light in the apparitions at Tilly. "In some of these manifestations," he says, "the pretended Blessed Virgin spoke. What did she say? Mere platitudes: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' But this had already been said in so many words at Lourdes. Shortly after the proclamation of the dogma it had a meaning and an object; but here, and now that no one thinks of raising the least doubt as to this dogma, long since universally accepted, what was the use of this repetition? . . . Tilly seems to me to be a vulgar patchwork of all the apparitions of the time together, and its most noticeable mark is the entire absence of any character which would ensure its own originality or its object. For God never does anything without reason, nor does he imitate himself."[1]

The particular effects in the souls of seers should also be studied with interest. First, the immediate effects. True visions, like all divine communications, put the soul in a state of calm, trustfulness, and peace. *Pax vobis!* This is the gift which all apparitions of our risen Lord brought with them. No doubt in the beginning a certain passing fear and anxiety may affect the seer, as happened to the Blessed Virgin herself, wholly astonished at finding herself saluted by an angel: *Turbata est in sermone ejus.*[2] The reason is that nature, feeling itself raised by God above itself, easily falls into a faltering state in the presence of the divine omnipotence. But, as Benedict XIV remarks, this is but a moment of crisis, very quickly overcome by grace, and calmness and deep peace soon take the place of the first astonishment and anxiety. Thus Bernadette during her visions had not even a quickened pulse.

[1] *Les apparitions de Tilly*, p. 57. [2] *Luc.* i 29.

The hallucinatory crisis, on the contrary, usually continues to be troublesome because it is essentially a morbid crisis. It always produces stupor, then agitation and fever, occasionally cries and contortions. The sufferer comes out of it tired, with body worn out, with health generally adversely affected by the frequency of these pathological states; whereas the visions of our saints, far from wearying them, were the source of renewed vigour, as St Teresa many times experienced.

Still more painful and tiring must be the obsession of the diabolical vision, because it is essentially deprived of the unction of grace. If it give enjoyment at first, it is sensual and occasionally carnal delight, and soon this false enjoyment gives way to uneasiness, disgust, and even maddening fear. Let us recall the instance of Luther: "Luther, during his nocturnal visions, trembles, his heart beats dreadfully. I then understood, said this apostate, how it often happens that people die at daybreak: it is because the devil can kill or choke men, and, without going so far, he places them, when he attacks them, in so distressful a state that it may easily cause death."[1] It is obvious that in this there is nothing of the unction of grace, and the claw of Satan is discovered.

With regard to the mediate and more remote effects of true vision, they always consist either in a conversion, as in the case of St Paul, or more commonly in a notable progress in the interior life, especially in humility. All the mystical saints are unanimous on this point. "This is really the way," writes St Teresa, "in which these things come to pass; if the raptures be true raptures, the fruits and advantages spoken of abide in the soul; but if they did not, I should have great doubts about their being from God—yea, rather, I should be afraid they were those frenzies of which St Vincent [Ferrer] speaks."[2]

Consequently if the seer, or he who thinks himself favoured with this heavenly gift, draw from it vanity, if he refuse to submit his visions in all their details, with perfect submission, to competent judges charged with their examination, it is useless to push the trial of them further: it is certain that the apparition is not divine and that it can only be hallucinatory or diabolical.

Nevertheless, this submission to a director is so far but a negative sign. The more the seer increases in heroic virtue the more he is raised in sanctity, and proportionately the more confidence will he inspire in those whose mission it is to test

[1] Balmès, *Le Protestantisme comparé*, vol. i, p. 367.
[2] *Life*, ch. xx.

his vision. The degrees of sanctity, without being in any way identified, as we have said, with the degrees of the mystical gifts, render them at least much more likely.

Such are the *moral* signs which must be the complement to those that are *intellectual* and *physiological.* They enable us to distinguish, clearly and surely, true divine visions from their diabolical or hallucinatory counterfeits when these visions or pretended visions are personal; but they may also be collective, and this is a new complication of the same problem which we cannot omit, and shall therefore proceed to study briefly.

§ 8

Collective hallucinations

The question of collective hallucinations is of sufficient importance to be treated separately. Doubtless, whether they be individual or collective, hallucinations are always essentially the same phenomenon, and the fundamental rules which we have laid down are equally applicable to both cases. Nevertheless, there is here added a *new element* which complicates the former case; that of a number of witnesses and of "madness in common," which needs special attention. Moreover, according to the rules of good method, which advances gradually from the simple to the complex, from the more easy to the more difficult, we should keep the more complex case until the end of this study of hallucination. First of all, is general hallucination of all men *possible?*

Clearly no. Since it is an accidental and pathological state, as we have shown, we cannot admit that all men can be ill or mad or abnormal at the same time, otherwise the accidental would become the essential and the exception the general rule—a contradiction in terms. But if the question be asked, not of the whole human race, nor of a whole people, nation or province, but only of a small group of men, the answer might well be different. It is clear that a whole group may be ill at once, and that there are maladies that are contagious, epidemic, or endemic. Can hallucination be of that number ?

Experience alone is able to answer the question. Now if science has not discovered the "bacillus of hallucination," it has at least often experienced veritable contagion of ideas, images, or passional sentiments, which provoke outbursts of delirium, madness in common, and collective hallucinations.

The *history* of our revolutions has more than once shown us crowds in delirium, performing acts of madness on a single word of command: *A la Bastille! Aux Tuileries!* And the chronicles of ancient times, in periods of public calamity, during plagues or great wars, the crusades, the siege of Jerusalem, and so on, are full of accounts of frightful apparitions, signs in the sky or on earth, striking peoples with terror.

But the modern annals of medicine are rich enough in much more precise facts, still better studied. Let us cite some on which to base our theory of collective hallucinations.

The instance most often cited is that of the English sailors which Fr. de Bonniot borrows from Brierre de Boismont: "One day an English sailor imagined he saw the ghost of one of his mates, who had died a few days before, floating on the sea. He gave a cry, and others ran up; he told what he had seen, and the whole crew thought they saw the same vision. Soon the ship drew near to the apparition and the illusion was dispelled: it was only a log of wood. It is not difficult to understand what had happened. The log of wood at a distance bore some resemblance to the human form. The sailor, still moved by the recent death of his mate, whose body had been thrown into the sea, connects this form with the image of the dead man distinctly engraved on his memory; the rest of the crew, worked up by the cries and statement of the visionary, equally connect in a spontaneous manner the sensation which strikes every eye in the same way with the image which is identical in each mind; the phenomenon is *almost the same in all*, because in all of them it meets with the same elements. Supposing that a passenger had come on board after the man's death, there is no doubt that he would have been spared the illusion."[1]

This case, simple as it seems at first glance, has the grave objection of being less a true *hallucination*, all the elements of which—as we have seen—are the fruit of the imagination, than an ordinary *illusion*, in which a real perception is associated with an imaginary interpretation. The identity of the perception of a piece of floating wreckage, common to all the sailors, is the cause of the illusion being identical as regards the position of this object, and of its form being *almost the same* with all of them, though this latter is only so in appearance. If each one had been able to draw the shape

[1] De Bonniot, *Le miracle et les sciences médicales*, p. 96.

or outline of what he imagined he saw, there would probably not have been two of the drawings identical. This infinite variety, largely disguised here by the circumstance of a real and objective element, is more conspicuous in all the cases of hallucination properly so called.

In the wreck of the *Ville-de-Saint-Nazaire* (March 7, 1897) hallucinations began on the fifth day. Exhaustion was general; hunger, thirst, nakedness, and cold tortured the unfortunate passengers, and the vision of death with all its horrors haunted every mind. The distracted yearning to see the coast or some ship of rescue, or safety in some other form, produced most dissimilar phantoms. The first of these sufferers is the steward, who throws himself into the sea, believing that he has touched dry land; others see islands or continents appear on the horizon; others, again, point out vessels hastening up from the distance. And these islands, these continents, and these ships present themselves to each one of the sufferers under a thousand forms and a thousand different features.

In the wreck of the *Medusa* (July 2, 1816), during her voyage to Senegal, the *Argus* came across her and took off several survivors after twelve days of agony. Each had but one fixed idea, that of being saved, but this single passion had produced in them the most diverse and least concordant hallucinations.

In the apparitions at Tilly there was the same variety: "At one time it is the Blessed Virgin that appears, at another St Joseph; it is a living person and a statue; now it is Christ, now some saint; it is a cloud, it is a banderole; the apparition rises from the earth or comes down from the sky, or again appears on a cloud; now it has near it a multitude of angels, now five, now two, now a first communicant, more often nothing at all. Then it is a series of fantastic animals; here the vision asks for a chapel, there it shows the design of one; further off it promises cures; at one time it smiles and at another it weeps."[1]

In all these collective hallucinatory visions we always meet with *three essential elements*, which it is important to note in order to distinguish them from true collective visions.

1. All the imaginations are stimulated beforehand by common emotions, such as the tragic death of a comrade and the belief in apparitions; the cruel anguish of a wreck and the desire for some rescuer to arise; stories of supernatural visions, and

[1] Brettes, *Les apparitions de Tilly*, p. 56.

so on. In true visions, on the contrary, these common emotions are the effect and not the cause of the vision.

2. The imaginations are successively awakened by a kind of mutual provocation of those who first saw. It is a well-known phenomenon of sympathy. When one same emotional wave spreads over a crowd, it brings about wonderful effects of automatic imitation; first of all, one or two are affected, then twenty, finally the whole assembly mark time to the sound of the drum, and the military music transports our legions of soldiers and leads them to death.

Young girls in the same class may all fall into a fit of epilepsy on seeing one of their number suddenly attacked by this fearful malady. Suicides through imitation and all crimes of imitation have become notorious. . . . This is what has been so well described as "collective madness." Collective hallucinations through emulation or mutual sympathy are a peculiar instance of it. True visions, on the contrary, have no need whatever of these reciprocal excitations between the seers.

3. The third characteristic of collective hallucinations—and the most important—is their variety or lack of uniformity and agreement. All the imaginations, working on one and the same general theme, will never end by producing images absolutely identical in the infinite complexity of their details, but at most they will be vaguely alike or more often notably different.

It is the same in a painting competition; given the same subject, each will treat it in his own way, according to his taste, his character, and his personal impressions, so that it would never be possible to have two pictures alike, as they would be if from the same block or plate. That is impossible.

Even though we might picture the hallucination of all as emanating from and directed by one seer, this singleness of influence and command would never succeed in producing such an identity. For instance, in a shipwreck if one authoritative voice were raised declaring that there was a far-away island in view, no more would be needed for all the hallucinations to take a common direction, picturing the phantom of the blessed island where safety is to be found. But this unity of image will only be vague and general: each one will form a different idea of it.

If it is a rescue ship which all imagine, its form and type will vary according to the imagination of each. Should a

voice again be raised describing the apparent type of the ship, unity would still be not complete, each imagining different details, a careful examination of which would easily disclose their divergence.

Now, this lack of agreement cannot exist in a true vision when it is collective. The thing seen must show itself the same to all, and all must see it as it outwardly exists. It is not, then, collective hallucination that is impossible, as certain ill-informed apologists state, but perfect *uniformity* among all in such an illusion. And this fundamental test is enough to distinguish it radically from a true collective vision.

The first care, then, in an inquiry into a collective vision is to separate the testimonies of each witness, to study them apart, and to find if they agree or not in all their details. If they do not agree, it is because they are the fruit of individual phantasy and of hallucination; if they exactly agree, on the contrary, it is because they are the result of a real objective vision, of which it then remains to determine the character, heavenly or diabolical; but the first and most difficult and important step will have been securely effected: real vision will have been distinguished from hallucination.

Thus, for instance, if in a collective vision, like that of Pontmain, all see the same apparition in the same position in the sky, and describe it identically in all its details; if all see the same banderole unfolded, having the same shape and colour, with the same inscription, and little by little make out the same letters appearing in succession, spell out the same unforeseen and varied words, and read the same sentence, this agreement is an evident sign of the real objectivity of the vision. Only a real object can be seen by all in the same way, whilst it is impossible for twenty different people to dream the same dream.

Perfect agreement in the testimony of a great number of seers is then an indisputable proof of the reality of the vision. And here we have a new reply, no less emphatic, to the incredulity which so unreasonably claims to explain all visions by hallucination. This convenient explanation is once more found to fail and proved to be false.

It would be an opposite and not less serious exaggeration to recognize as objective only the visions common to several seers and checked by them all. We have no right to reject the *vision of one alone*—presuming that it has all the marks of authenticity which we have been studying—under the pretext

that he is the only seer and all the others present have heard or seen nothing. It is obvious that an apparition might quite well have shown itself to one whilst remaining invisible to the others. In fact, as history proves, this is what happens in the greater number of cases. Thus St Paul, cast down to the earth on the road to Damascus, is the only one to see the heavenly apparition, and his companions only perceive the accompanying phenomena.

In the same way Bernadette was the only beholder of the apparition of the Immaculate Virgin at Lourdes. If there were two seers at La Salette, there was only one at Pellevoisin, as in the case of the greater number of St Teresa's visions, those of St Gertrude, St Margaret Mary, and most of our great mystics. The testimony of one alone, then, is enough to convince us. But when the apparition is visible to all beholders present, or at least to a great number, this is a new test, the result of mutual confirmation, which adds an unanswerable value to all the others.

Let us sum up in a few words the answer that we have just given to the unbelievers who have equal contempt for all visions, and consider it enough to class them all as hallucinations in order to get rid of difficult facts. Their objection, as we have said, has no meaning as concerns imaginative and intellectual visions. The question of external visions remains. In this sphere alone it is serious but in no way triumphant.

We will grant that hallucinations are counterfeits, but clumsy counterfeits, of true visions, and that confusion is possible to superficial minds relying on common appearances. A little prudence and science is all that is required to show them up.

1. First, *prudence*. We have granted that visions are always liable to suspicion, not only with women but also with men, especially with hysterics and those that are the subjects of an excitable imagination: such are sick folk, the pretended seers among whom are more than suspect of illusion. This is no new rule. St Teresa repeats it a score of times, and St Alphonsus Liguori, in his *Praxis for Confessors*,[1] lays down the principle: "Place no confidence in visions and particular revelations; do not make perfection consist in being favoured with them, for if there are some of them that are true, a much greater number are false and deceptive."

[1] Ch. x.

2. Secondly, *profane science.* Thanks to the progress of psychical and physiological science, we have seen that it is easy to distinguish hallucination from true or objective vision. The tests of this are certain and numerous: their practical application is most often easy. With a little care no confusion is possible. As regards the great number of seers, this, rather than being an obstacle, is a new test.

3. Thirdly, *sacred science.* In the case of a real objective vision—shown to be so by physiological signs—it is the intellectual and moral signs which establish its supernatural character—that is, its absolute or relative transcendence. Doubtless this is not always manifest, but there comes a point at which the phenomenon evidently surpasses the compass of the mind of the seer and even the scope of the human mind, such, for instance, as prophecy, revelation, infused knowledge, the gift of tongues, and so on. In the presence of these transcendent phenomena we are forced to have recourse to a transcendental cause; logic demands it, and theology easily makes a distinction between the good or evil, divine or diabolical, supernatural. The spirit of evil betrays himself sooner or later, and the wise and prudent director will know how to recognize him by the divers signs we have been studying.

Thanks to these traditional rules, we shall avoid the double danger of a blind and naive credulity which sees miracle everywhere, and the no less blind incredulity of the rationalists which persists in seeing it nowhere. The truth lies between these two equally condemnable excesses.[1]

[1] *Note on "spiritual mimicry."*—

It has been very justly said that the devil is the " ape of God," and many fine pages have been written on this subject (see, for example, *Les apparitions de Lourdes*, by J. B. Estrade, p. 150). But it must not be forgotten that the instinct of imitation is not only diabolical, it is also very human. Even involuntarily, man is inclined to imitate, to tread in others' footsteps, to put himself in unison with those around him. *Fashion*, especially feminine, is a striking example of this among people of the most healthy temperament. But in the morbid state pathological cases of spontaneous imitation are even more noticeable, because they are a kind of exaggeration of the normal facts. Cases are known, for instance, of *echolalia*, in which the patient repeats mechanically all that he hears; of *contagious epilepsy*, in which several children, on simply seeing a comrade fall down in a fit of epilepsy, are in turn seized with the same complaint; of *collective hallucination*, already dealt with above (p. 395), and *collective madness*.

We must not then be astonished if, at the time of some great and memorable event, such as the apparitions at Lourdes, which created a commotion throughout the Pyrenees and far beyond, there should be

§ 9

Supernatural dreams

In the same way that hallucination is a counterfeit of external vision, so the dream can counterfeit imaginary vision. There are some dreams so coherent, circumstantial, and striking, that they seem to be a message from heaven. Some of them refer to the future and seem to be exactly verified by events. Hence the mysterious curiosity they have always awakened in the minds of men.

Whether a dream can have a spiritual origin is a preliminary question that a Christian has no need even to ask; so many instances abound in both Old and New Testament and in the lives of the saints. Nevertheless, it would be an abuse and a *superstition* to think them all supernatural; moreover, in Holy Writ and in the maxims of the saints there is a very express general warning against giving credence to dreams; a warning often reiterated by the Fathers and the Councils of the Church. Thus, in Leviticus[1] and Deuteronomy[2] God forbids the Israelites to observe dreams. This practice is censured as a crime in the impious Manasses.[3] Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, the prophets, Isaias, Jeremias, sometimes condemn it, at others turn it to ridicule.

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produced, not only diabolical apings, but also purely natural imitations or counterfeits, among persons who are neuropathic, cataleptic, subject to hallucinations or half mad. Imitations, moreover, that are clumsy and easy to unmask by the help of the physiological, intellectual, and moral tests which we have scientifically established above.

Imitation being a counterfeit of the true, far from destroying or rendering doubtful the idea of a *true*, it presupposes and confirms it, as a copy requires an original. The important thing is to be able to distinguish them, which, given good tests, is not impossible.

Even more, it is not unlikely that the commotion caused by such a great event should be propagated not only in the neighbourhood, but even at a distance, provoking in other countries and at later dates epidemics of visionaries or eccentrics. It has been possible to show with truth and certainty that such and such an event was nothing more than a plagiarism of Lourdes, supplying nothing original or new or useful (p. 393). All these later imitations, then, even when involuntary, among persons otherwise very pious and in good faith—as soon as they are seen to be mere useless and vain repetitions—should be looked upon with suspicion at first sight, and the rules which we have laid down for collective hallucinations should be applied to them. The *first* vision, or series of visions, alone has the right to escape this suspicion of *mimicry*.

[1] xix 26. [2] xviii 10. [3] 2 Paral. xxxiii 6.

Such insistence is amply justified by the immense diffusion of this superstition. It flourished among all the ancient peoples: Egyptians, Persians, Medes, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Hindus, and others. It was held in honour and practised by almost all great men and philosophers: Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Hippocrates, Galen, the Stoics, the Peripatetics, and so on. Those who had the good sense and courage to protest against so great an aberration are a small minority, at the head of which we find Aristotle, Plutarch, and Cicero in his treatise *On Divination*.

The interpretation of dreams was not only a speculative theory, but an art and a very lucrative profession, known as *oneirocritic*, from the Greek ὄνειρος, a dream, and κριτής, judge. The Egyptian soothsayers had no difficulty in finding a key to dreams in their hieroglyphic writing, in which all the signs are conventional pictures or symbols. Thus ears of corn represented abundance, a dragon royalty, a serpent poison or sickness, an eagle or a sparrow-hawk divinity, a viper silver, a frog imposture, a cat adultery, and so on. The Chaldaean wise men had other rules for interpretation, and usually each people had its own oneirocritic language. Hence arose the greatest confusion in the replies of diviners, who by their own mutual contradictions condemned their superstitious practices.

Are natural dreams, then, always to be despised as vain illusions of the imagination, will-o'-the-wisps? This would be an exaggeration in the opposite direction. From the *physiological and medical* point of view, the natural observation of dreams, freed from all superstitious practice, may occasionally have a certain usefulness, at least in some illnesses. In the state of sleep, in which external life is silent in order to allow the whole activity of the soul to be concentrated within, we may have a more vivid experience, although in a more or less unconscious manner, of certain details of physical or moral life which are unperceived while awake. And the imagination, reflecting these hidden sensations in images, may give us an unexpected revelation of them.

Thus, the dreams of many wounded persons have brought about the discovery of the circumstances attending the accident and the internal organs injured. Certain dreams accompanied by abnormal and painful sensations, known to doctors under the name of *oneirodynia*, reveal to them with sureness a

gastro-intestinal infection or fermentation. Obstruction of the circulatory passages or spasms of the heart give rise to characteristic nightmares. The intoxication which precedes or follows nephritis causes dreaming of precipices and of falling into chasms. Alcohol and other toxic agents, such as opium, belladonna, hashish, produce dreams or real delirium. We must not, then, despise medical diagnosis by means of dreams. A bad dream may suggest to the doctor some very valuable hint, and even enable him naturally to foresee coming events, the approach of some illness, or even death.

From the *intellectual and moral* standpoint, the revelations which dreams may occasion have always had, in the eyes of the people, a still more marvellous appearance. This is because such dreams are commonly an exaggeration of our customary preoccupations, of our desires, our fears, and our most secret passions. Nero, the murderer of his own mother, is goaded with remorse and sees her again in a frightful dream, which is itself a punishment. Athalie, after her crimes, saw her mother Jezabel in a dream immortalized by the poetic genius of Racine: *C'etait pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit . . .*, etc.

The fears and lurid presentiments which disturb a dream may even be found verified afterwards by the course of events, sometimes natural, sometimes fortuitous; and these striking coincidences may counterfeit prophecy. Thus Brutus, on the plains of Philippi, saw his familiar spirit in a dream foretelling the coming defeat which he feared; he was, in fact, vanquished by Antony and Octavius, and killed himself in despair. All these dreams are easily accounted for in a most natural way by the psychological theory of the *subconscious*. In sleep the dream is the echo of the hidden ego; it is, so to speak, the valve by which the tumultuous waves of this ego, more or less unconscious, escape, and thus makes it known by transforming it into revealing images. These indications may be valuable, not only for medical diagnosis, as we have said, but also for the guidance of the intellectual and moral life.

Such is the scope and meaning of dreams. Always to attribute a supernatural character to them would be to be engulfed in the superstition of popular credulity so well exploited by fortune-tellers and more or less clear-sighted somnambulists.

Nevertheless, there have been *supernatural* dreams. Even though we had not instances in Holy Writ, it would be enough

to admit the existence of God and his Providence to conclude that he can, when it pleases him, so guide the course of natural forces, including dreams, as to strike the attention of man by heavenly warnings, counsels, threats, predictions, or any other method of instructing and edifying him.

For a simple spiritualist philosopher there is nothing more reasonable than this, and even Bayle—who cannot be accused of credulity and weak-mindedness—found himself forced to agree to it. In fact, the Lord warned Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary, in a dream, of the threats against the life of the divine Child and counselled him to flee into Egypt. It was in sleep that the Magi were warned not to return to Herod; that the disciple Ananias was informed of the conversion of Saul, and that Saul himself obtained knowledge of the coming of Ananias, by the imposition of whose hands he was to recover his sight. In the Old Testament we read of several prophetic dreams, which certainly came from God, among which may be cited those of Jacob, of Laban, of Joseph, of Pharao, of Solomon, of Daniel, of Nabuchodonosor, of Judas Machabeus, and others. The providential character of these dreams, the exactness with which the events foretold were fulfilled, leave no doubt as to their divine inspiration. Moreover, the authority of the Church or of tradition would be enough to cut short any doubt as regards these biblical instances.

But when such authority does not step in, how should supernatural dreams be distinguished from those that are not so; by what *signs* should they be recognized ?

The *first* is the extremely reasonable nature of divine dreams; instead of being extravagant and absurd, like the greater number of common dreams, they are always quite coherent and connected; they appear to be deliberate and reasoned out, because they are the work of a higher intelligence, guiding the human imagination and preventing it from wandering. Here we have already a first indirect characteristic of transcendence, for the natural dream is freed from all intelligent guidance.

The *second* character is the essential transcendence of this intelligent guidance. It is shown by the revelation of facts or truths which are clearly beyond the capacity of the seer's mind, and occasionally beyond the scope of any human mind, such as the prophetic announcement of contingent future events. Thus the dream of Joseph, the son of Jacob, which foretold

his future greatness beyond his brethren, could not be the result of human intelligence.

The *third* sign is the deep and ineffable impression of certainty that is left in the soul by divine dreams, as opposed to ordinary dreams which are quickly forgotten. God's intervention is no doubt very rare, but when he does intervene he is careful to add striking circumstances and confirmations in virtue of which it is impossible to doubt that it is he who is acting. Such dreams produce so great an evidence of truth to our minds and such presentiments in our hearts that it becomes impossible for us to confuse them with common dreams. They are obviously a warning from heaven for us which remains deeply graven on our souls.

We would add a *fourth*, though very rare sign—that of several dreams occurring to several persons without previous agreement or mutual suggestion, in which they experience an identical vision at the same moment, by which they are induced to co-operate in the same work for the glory of God. Such was the simultaneous vision of Pope Liberius and the two benefactors who founded the church of St Mary Major, or Our Lady of the Snows, on the Esquiline, at the spot where snow had just fallen in the middle of summer.

All these direct or indirect signs of transcendence are unanswerable proofs of the supernatural source of dreams. And rationalists have endeavoured in vain to explain them by the *subconscious* ego, of which dreams are said to be the echo and unsuspected revelation; which psychological explanation we should be the first to consider well founded as regards ordinary dreams, but which fails in the supernatural sphere. Consciousness or unconsciousness in man, the ego and the subego, even though, with Buffon, we apply to them metaphorically the term *duplex homo*, are only aspects or parts of the same human nature, which is incapable of any supernatural effect. The one cannot reveal to the other that which is outside its scope, such as the knowledge of undetermined future events. We must, then, logically have recourse to the intervention of a cause higher than nature.

The rationalists are on no surer ground in pointing out the lack of *usefulness* or *fitness* of the intervention of the divinity in our dreams. Cardinal Bona has answered this objection by stating that, on the contrary, God might prefer to communicate with man during sleep, both because the soul is then

more recollected and less distracted by many cares and outward things, and because in sleep the mind is more passive, reasons less, and therefore is more docile to the action of God; or finally, because in the silence of the night impressions made on our souls are more mysterious and are engraved there more deeply.[1]

For his part, St Thomas goes so far as to maintain that the imaginative vision cannot be produced—outside ecstasy—except in sleep, or at least in that imperfect sleep in which the perceptions of the outward senses cannot be fully distinguished from the pictures of the imagination. It is necessary, he says, that the external senses should be suspended at the time, otherwise the soul would too easily confuse what it sees with the eyes of the body with what it sees with the eyes of the soul: *Necesse est fieri abstractionem a sensibus, ut talis apparitio phantasmatum non referatur ad ea quae exterius sentiuntur.*[2]

St Augustine is of the same opinion, and gives the same reason: in order for an imaginary vision to be of use it must not be able to be confused with an outward vision: the activity of the outward senses, then, must be suspended either by ecstasy or at least by sleep.[3] Some writers add that the vision of the supernatural world naturally disturbs our senses and makes us as though possessed; their suspension would then be a necessary result. But we do not think all visions reach this height; their object may be less dazzling and less disturbing to human nature. Such an effect, then, would be usual rather than indispensable.

Be these controverted matters as they may, all mystical writers are agreed in maintaining that the most favourable moment for imaginative visions is when the operation of the outward senses is suspended—either by ecstasy or at least by physiological sleep. The soul is then wholly passive beneath the action of God, and, like soft wax, is able to receive the imprint of all it may please him to trace there, and every impulse he may desire to communicate.

Let us end this study of supernatural dreams by a remark as to their *object*, which sometimes is simply representative, at others symbolic or allegorical.

The dream is *representative* when it is a picture more or less

[1] *De discret. spirit.*, ch. xvi, n. 3, p. 289.
[2] II-II, q. clxxiii, a. 3.
[3] *De Gen. ad litt.*, bk. xii, ch. xii, pp. 583, 584

representing some historic person or fact, either present, past, or to come. Thus the scenes of the Passion of our Lord, seen and described in so many imaginative visions by St Gertrude, Catherine Emmerich, and others, were representative. So also was the apparition of St Bruno to Count Roger of Sicily while asleep, to warn him of a danger which threatened his life.

On the contrary, the vision of the Patriarch Joseph, when he saw in sleep the sun, the moon, and the stars coming in turn to worship him, was only *symbolical*. So also Jacob's ladder, the seven fat and lean kine of Pharao, the dreams of his two servants, those of most of the prophets, and especially the mysterious emblems of the Apocalypse of St John, are allegorical images the understanding of which needs interpretation, at times difficult.

Enigmatical visions such as these are much the most frequent in the lives of the saints. The dreams of St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi or of St Hildegarde, for instance, ought to be a warning to directors against being too precipitate in judgements which might incline them to reject complicated and difficult allegories as vain and imaginary. We are here reminded of the words of Holy Writ: " For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ?" *Quis enim cognovit sensum Domini? aut quis consiliarius ejus fuit?*[1]

§ 10

Vision through opaque bodies

The marvellous facts of the cognitive order which have so greatly whetted the curiosity and stimulated the wisdom of our theologians are not limited to the internal or external visions that we have just studied; there is a whole category of facts, no less marvellous and no less common, in the legends of the saints, of which we have still to speak—those, that is, belonging to the *sight of the invisible*. Sometimes things are naturally invisible because they are too far away. Thus Pope Pius V from his window in the Vatican saw the naval battle of Lepanto and Don John's victory over the Turks. Such also are the phenomena of telepathy and second sight. At other times objects, although near enough to us, are invisible because of the interposition of opaque bodies which hide them.

[1] *Rom.* xi 34.

We begin by this latter, the simplest case of *sight of the invisible*, and we shall soon understand the reasons which render this progressive and logical order in our inquiry desirable.

The fact of vision, under certain conditions, through opaque bodies—whether it be due to natural or supernatural, divine or diabolical causes—is an *indisputable fact*, very often demonstrated throughout the centuries, and better still in our own time.

All mystical writers have written one or several chapters on this kind of vision or clairvoyance. Notably Görres, in his *la Mystique*, vol. iii, p. 169. But it is useless to be delayed by such ancient events, not so well authenticated and possibly legendary, when so many contemporary facts abound.

Let us cite but one or two recent examples in order to bring clearly to our minds the phenomenon in question.

The scientific journal *Cosmos*, in the issue for December 14, 1901,[1] thought fit to publish the following letter from a Lazarist Father at the College of Beyrout: " We have at this moment, in the neighbourhood of Antonia, a very singular case. Kesroan, the province of Lebanon where Antonia is situated, is extremely poor in water. . . . There now lives at a village about two hours from here a young girl of fourteen who has the faculty of being able *to see water beneath the earth*, even at a great depth; she can tell the depth at which it is to be found and the quantity of water, especially if it be running water. This young girl was brought to the college; we tried all manner of means to deceive her, but without success. This is how she proceeds: There must be sunshine, and the sun must be shining on the spot where the search is to be made. She begins by covering her head with an ordinary black veil, and looks first in the direction of the sun and then on the earth. After a few moments she will say if there is water, the exact spot at which it will be found, and whether there is little or much.

" These are some of the experiments we have made. The roof of the college refectory is some fifty to sixty metres long, and is covered by a very thick terrace of the same length. In the refectory were placed basins of water in different places. The young girl told the exact number of receptacles and the

[1] See also *Missions catholiques*, March 7, 1902, and *l'Univers*, April 8, 1902.

places where they were. She was then taken over the water system which supplied the college. The pipes are not visible, and only the brother who placed them in position knew where they were. The young girl pointed them out correctly, as well as their direction. Taken without her knowledge over a cistern, she told us how much water was in it. A curious fact is that glass and metals are opaque to her, whilst rock and earth seem to her to be as clear as crystal. We asked her how long she had possessed this faculty; she answered that she had had it for three years, but had not dared to speak of it, for fear of being taken for a witch."

Another inhabitant of Lebanon who also had the power of seeing water beneath the ground was referred to in the paper *l'Univers*, April 8, 1902. Several analogous cases were notified in France in the provincial and Parisian press, but we have not been able to verify them.

All cases of this kind, which might be multiplied, have so far been classed by theologians among suspicious cases, hovering doubtfully on the confines of either diabolical or natural marvels. Some clearly condemn them as tainted with witchcraft;[1] others, more indulgent, seek some natural explanation of them. Thus Görres explains this power of seeing through strata of earth by some special light which is projected from the eye on to objects hidden beneath the ground to lighten them and see them. But this pseudo-scientific hypothesis and others like it are already old and out of date. It has, in addition, the drawback of warding off the problem without solving it; and, above all, of complicating it by new difficulties still more insoluble, on which it would take too long to dwell.

It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth that the progress of science ended by throwing some light on these mysterious phenomena. We refer, as may be guessed, to the wonderful discoveries connected with the *black light*, the dark radiations both of the famous X-rays and of analogous rays which a series of learned physicists have begun to study, and the practical application of which has already obtained incalculable import. We must shortly sum up the most curious of these investigations in order to show what conclusions may be evolved from them respecting vision through opaque bodies.

[1] Delrio, S.J., *Disputationes magicae*, p. 19 (Lyons, 1604).

Since Newton we have known that, by the aid of the prism, the white light of the sun can be split up into its elements, the combination of which is known as the solar spectrum—violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. These seven colours follow each other in invariable order, and, placed side by side, blend together to produce a multitude of intermediate shades; but they are always arranged in the same order, having violet and red as their extreme limits. Beyond these two extremities of the solar spectrum—that is to say, in the ultra-violet and infra-red—the human eye can distinguish nothing; but are there no other radiations invisible to our sight ?

This is the first problem that suggests itself, above all in view of the favoured theory of waves of light. In fact, if this range of colours corresponds to a vibratory range rising from 450 to 785 thousand millions of vibrations per second of ethereal rays, we are quite naturally led to ask why this range could not be extended on either side of these figures, though in a manner that is not visible to the human retina ?

Their invisibility cannot be an insurmountable obstacle to their investigation, for though the eye is insensitive to their physiological action, their physical or chemical action may be revealed to us through certain substances. This is precisely what has been shown. Thus, by placing certain fluorescent bodies in certain dark parts of the solar spectrum, in the ultra-violet or the infra-red regions—such substances, for instance, as sulphide of zinc or platinocyanide of potassium —they become suddenly illuminated, thus showing, by their luminous reaction, the hidden action of invisible rays with which they are struck. Such invisible rays then exist, since they act on certain bodies.

A great number of other experiments equally prove this. A photographer, instead of exposing a slide and its sensitized paper to the direct action of the sun in a frame, may enclose the whole in a metal box or an iron safe, which is then exposed to the sun. The visible rays will not be able to pass through the thickness of the metal, but other invisible rays pass through quite well, and the photograph will be produced by this means in the dark. All that is needed for this is a somewhat longer exposure, the duration of which depends on the nature of the metal and its thickness. The sun is not even necessary for the experiment. A paraffin lamp, with a longer exposure, is enough.

At the conferences of the *Académie des sciences* of January 27 and February 17, 23, and 24, 1896, M. Gustave Le Bon disclosed the curious experiments which, after he had discovered what he called " black light," enabled him to draw up a classification of metals and other substances according to their degree of transparency to these dark rays. It is noticeable that those bodies that are considered most opaque to ordinary light are in this classification the most transparent. Whence he concluded that the impossibility of seeing through bodies considered opaque only holds good on account of the lack of sensitiveness of the eye. In other words, there are no bodies that are absolutely opaque; they are only so relatively to such and such a kind of light.

The *Académie des sciences* unanimously agreed with him. M. H. Becquerel, however, pointed out that his father, with Fresnel, had already laid down the principles of M. Le Bon's experiments. They had already recognized that the transparency of a body depends on the greater or less density of its molecular structure on the one hand, and on the other, on the greater or less length of the wave which strikes it. If there be proportion or harmony between these two factors, the ray pierces the body, which becomes transparent; if not, it cannot pass through, and the body remains opaque. Consequently these two scholars had already declared that the infra-red rays (of great length of wave) ought to pass through most non-metallic bodies, and be arrested by water and the metals; and that, on the contrary, the ultra-violet waves (of very short wave-length) ought to pass through the densest metallic bodies. These learned forecasts were afterwards confirmed by the experiments of M. Le Bon.

But it is not enough for science to have shown the existence of dark radiations, whether infra-red or ultra-violet, and to have proved that the series of these invisible radiations is much more considerable than that of the visible radiations—thus the invisible infra-red spectrum alone appears to be twenty times more extensive than the visible—it would be furthermore necessary to study the nature of these numberless multitudes of invisible rays, and for that purpose to isolate them, to classify them by groups according to species, and to name them in accordance with their properties.

To sum up these immense investigations would require volumes and be beyond the scope of our subject. We will confine ourselves, then, to certain details that have most interest

for the public and are most useful for the apologetic end we have in view.

The *first discovery* was that of the *cathode rays*, due to a Catholic scholar, Dr. Hittorf (about 1894 ?). These rays are so named because they emanate from the cathode or *negative* plate of a Crookes' tube, which contains any gas, rarefied to a millionth of atmosphere,[1] through which the inducted current of a Ruhmkorff's coil is passed. Dark themselves, these rays illumine the bodies which they touch. Thus the Crookes' tube assumes a green colour, crystal becomes blue, precious stones are clothed with most brilliant hues. These rays do not pass through a vacuum. A magnet makes them deflect from their rectilinear course. Glass and metals of minute thickness (two or three microns) are impenetrable or opaque; so also is a plain sheet of black paper, and so on.

The *second discovery* is that of *anticathode or X-rays*, due to Dr. Röntgen, of the University of Würzburg (Dec. 1895). They appear to be derived from the preceding, and present very different properties. Experimenting with a Crookes' tube, carefully wrapped in black paper—which arrests cathode rays—this scholar was greatly surprised to find that it was traversed by some obscure radiations which illumined near the tube a screen rendered fluorescent by means of platinocyanide of barium. He then caused these invisible radiations to act on a photographic plate which received their impression. Then, continuing his researches, he found that these new rays passed through wood, very thick books, flesh; and that they were arrested by bones, crystal, and metals. Placing his hand between these rays and a fluorescent screen, the skeleton of his fingers appeared visible on the screen. He in this way discovered the photography of the invisible, of which the first trial was presented to the *Académie des sciences* on January 20, 1896.

After the vision of the human skeleton came that of the inside of a purse, shut up in a closed box; the reading of a letter folded and sealed, and so forth. Thus were discovered the wonderful arts of radioscopy and radiography, with their limitless applications to medicine, surgery, and a great number of arts.

From the purely scientific point of view, the discovered

[1] In the famous glass tubes of Geissler this gas is only rarefied to one-thousandth of atmosphere at most: moreover, the phenomenon produced is very different.

properties of X-rays are no less important, for they threaten to upset optical theories. We shall limit ourselves to denoting those which are useful for our purpose. These rays are only able to follow a straight line; nothing will make them deflect; they can neither be reflected nor refracted. Also they are incapable of passing through a crystal lens or even the crystalline of the eye. Let us note this main point, whose very important consequences as regards vision through opaque bodies we shall soon see.

A *third series* of discoveries, inaugurated in 1896 by M. H. Becquerel and by M. and Mme. Curie, is that of a great number of radio-active substances—uranium, thorium, radium, polonium, actinium, and the like. Their molecules are comparable to little invisible suns, but of extraordinary luminous activity. Their dark light gives an impression on photographic plates, illumines fluorescent bodies, burns the skin and the flesh. It passes through black paper and through metals. It has neither reflection nor refraction nor polarization. It possesses a peculiar glow which does not exhaust the radio-active body, so that the duration of these mysterious lamps seems almost indefinite. M. Becquerel calculated that at the end of a thousand million years the loss of a piece of radium would be less than 1 milligramme.

From all these stupefying discoveries the most clear conclusion is that there are no absolutely opaque bodies. All are transparent for one luminous radiation or another. Why, then, do not our eyes see through every body as they do through air and through glass? Is it because the retina is insensitive to certain radiations? Here is a new problem, no less curious and important.

The solution of the ènigma seems to have progressed sufficiently to enable us already to conclude by this proposition, no doubt startling but safely justified: *The retina of the human eye is sensitive to the greater part of invisible radiations—perhaps to all.* And if it does not see them it is not from lack of the power, but because of the protecting screen or providential veil which God has placed in front of the retina—that is to say, the globulin and ocular environment such as the vitreous moisture. In fact, these organs of the eye are intended to refract the luminous rays, and therefore are impenetrable by the dark light, whether infra-red or ultra-violet, since it is incapable of refraction.

Without this providential veil, which imposes on us an obligatory reserve, our houses would be like glass, our clothes themselves would no longer protect us; most intimate objects would be no longer hidden, and therefore civil and religious society would no longer be possible to man.

The proof of this surprising assertion will be found in the experiments of which it remains for us to give a summary, doubtless very brief, but sufficient for our purpose.

Experiments have been performed on patients operated on for cataract with removal of the globulin; on those born blind; and on those with abnormal or exceptional visual sensitiveness. Let us examine the results obtained in these three cases.

The blind patients operated on for cataract were the first subjects for examination. Those were chosen from whom the part of the visual organ resembling a glass lens, which is the globulin, had been removed and replaced by spectacles.

The *first* experiments were those performed by Dr. Kraft. He prepared a perfectly obscured dark room and placed there the patient who had undergone the operation. He was made to sit down to allow his eyes to get accustomed to the darkness. After some minutes, the blind man began to make out a number of objects in the darkness which the doctor himself was unable to see, so that here, in the interior of the dark room, it was the blind man who was guiding the one who saw. The windows, which had been closed up with sheets of copper, on which the pale rays of the moon shone outside, appeared to the blind man to be as transparent as glass. Then the operator went outside the room and made gestures with his hands behind the copper plates, and these gestures were immediately seen by the blind man. Afterwards the copper was replaced respectively by sheets of tin, lead, zinc, and so on, and their transparence varied only in degree.

In France, analogous experiments were performed and often expounded at the *Académie des sciences*, especially by MM. de Chardonnet, de Rochas, Dr. Saillard, and others.[1] Thus, two cataract patients who had been operated on and who had lost the globulin were placed before a voltaic arc, enclosed in a special lantern that only allowed ultra-violet rays to pass; they saw clearly, through the metallic thickness of this lantern, the electric arc itself and every detail of its shape and movements.

The *second* experiments were performed at the blind school

[1] See *Comptes rendus de l'Acad. des sc.*, 1895, pp. 441 *ff.*

with X-rays, by M. Foveau de Courmelles. Out of 240 pupils, 36, being only half blind, were eliminated. The remaining 204 were placed in darkness in front of a Crookes' tube covered with a black veil. Nine of them, five girls and four boys, were able to see the X-rays. Two others saw in addition the cathode and fluorescent rays; finally, three others saw the cathode rays without the fluorescent. These subjects, blind as regards the rays visible to the normal eye, were thus able to see by invisible rays. We might be tempted, when seeing these blind children walking in the streets or playing at prisoner's base or puss in the corner, avoiding obstacles so cleverly, to suppose that they were guided not only by a more delicate and better trained touch than our own, but also by this sight of the invisible, the existence of which we did not even suspect until the other day, and the recent revelation of which still surprises us.

The *last* experiments were performed on those subjects of abnormal or exceptional sight properly known as sensitives,[1] who cannot be classed with the two preceding categories of the blind, yet nevertheless are, in a way, comparable with them, since like them they possess the vision of the invisible, at least under certain conditions. The study of these abnormal subjects, of very special sensitiveness, has hardly begun, but the principle that should direct the inquiry is clearly established, and may be stated thus: All the ultra-violet and infra-red rays can act on the retina when the transparence of the ocular environment allows them to reach it. This is realized in divers degrees in a certain number of abnormal cases, arising either from the removal of the globulin or the natural or accidental constitution of the ocular environment in certain subjects.

Thus is explained the case of the young Syrian girl of whom we spoke at the beginning of this study. In order to read through opaque bodies or strata of earth she made use of the dark rays of solar light at the time when it was most powerful, between midday and two o'clock, and this is how she went to work:

She first covered her head with a black veil[2] in order to

[1] See Dr. Kraft, *L'Homme sensitif—Le Cosmos*, 1895, II, p. 154.

[2] This black veil is like the dark room in which Dr. Kraft placed his subjects with the same end in view. The band over the eyes of hypnotized subjects on our public platforms or in drawing-rooms—when it is not trickery—may have the same effect.

prevent the access to her eyes of the visible rays, which would become blended with the obscure rays and hinder their distinct vision. Once isolated, the impression of these dark rays on the retina became much more clear. Furthermore, she needed great power of attention and self-concentration to distinguish them. That is why—once fixedly turned towards the spot which she wanted to explore, on which the sun was brightly shining—she insisted on absolute silence in her surroundings, in herself, and in all her senses, in order that the exercise of so subtle a faculty might not be disturbed. This also is why in such cases as this the result is assisted by the hypnotization of the seer, who concentrates every power on one sole object.

After a moment of sustained effort the girl began to perceive the strata of the earth to be transparent like crystal, thanks to the more subtle rays of ultra-violet or infra-red light which penetrated them everywhere, and in this crystal she saw dark veins which were the waters or metals impermeable by this light. This water she was thus enabled to describe, with its volume and direction. It is a shadow in the luminous picture, like the bones of the hand in its radiography with X-rays.

The explanation of a phenomenon so disconcerting at first sight is thus finally found. We consider it simple and enlightening even though there are some details that are still obscure.[1]

However wonderful may be this power of certain rays to pass through opaque bodies, rendering them as transparent as glass, we ought never to think it impossible or supranatural when we see, day by day, white light penetrating glass, air, water, and a thousand other bodies. At bottom this daily phenomenon is not less wonderful than the first. Familiarity alone prevents us from being astonished: *Assueta vilescunt.* Far from being surprised, let us rather look for fresh discoveries, no less unexpected; for the science of light, which is of yesterday, far from having said its last word, gives promise of other surprises within the next half-century.

Let us conclude. We maintain the eternal principle, so often reiterated by theologians, that the *vision of the invisible*, *remota et occulta patefacere*, is an act contrary to nature. But it

[1] Might it not be explained in the same way how it is that animals that live beneath the ground and make their way about there, possess rudimentary eyes without globulin or convergent environment? This question should be productive of interesting experiments.

belongs to science to enable us to distinguish that which is really invisible from that which is only so in appearance. Consequently, when we are confronted with a case of vision through opaque bodies, we must not be in a hurry to cry miracle, either divine or diabolical. The fact may be quite natural, although abnormal. We must first of all proceed to a medical examination, either of the temperament, more or less sensitive, of the subject, or of his visual organ. And it is only in default of every natural pathological cause that we are entitled to have recourse to the supernatural.

Practically, it is enough for us to know that this faculty of vision is habitual and can be exercised at will, as with our young Syrian, to discard any miraculous theory, for the mystical gifts are passive and never within our own power. On the other hand, as diabolical intervention may not be suspected without grave reasons, the field for natural hypotheses remains very wide.

§ 11

Telepathy and second sight

Quite recently, in the *Bulletin des armées*, these curious and always most mysterious phenomena have been brought into prominence and *rendered fashionable* in the Great War. There is nothing which need surprise us in this. It is during the most disturbed periods of history, in which wars and other great scourges of humanity have been let loose, that we have seen such prodigious occurrences multiplied. Our soldiers could not be an exception to this general rule. They lived and died in an environment of exceptional excitement and nervousness, very suitable to the production of the marvellous, sometimes real, more often purely imaginary.

Thus it is most important for us to have general rules which enable us to distinguish the true from the false, the real from the fanciful, the natural from the preternatural in all that the newspapers and reviews have published on this subject; more often than not without criticism, and merely to amuse the public. In order to expound them to our readers with greater method and clearness, we shall first of all sum up the *historical* aspect of the question, then we shall make a *classification*, and then, at the end, we shall try to give, if possible, some reasonable *explanation*—natural or supernatural.

I. *Brief history of the facts*

"There is nothing new under the sun," said the Wise Man, at least nothing completely new. This maxim is verified to the letter by the phenomena of telepathy and second sight, which are as old as the world.

Examples abound, both in that oldest historical monument of antiquity, the Bible, and in the New Testament and the most scholarly hagiographical collections, such as the enormous folios of the Bollandists. They show us a great number of prophets or other holy persons discovering the most hidden things and observing events that are taking place at inaccessible distances. Thus, Ezechiel tells us that while seated in his house he saw in spirit the scenes of abomination that were being committed in the Temple of Jerusalem.[1] Saul, seeking his father's asses, goes to consult the seer of Israel, who had the reputation of seeing the most hidden things at a great distance, who found them for him.[2] After having been smitten on the road to Damascus, Saul, whilst praying in the house of Judas, saw in spirit Ananias the disciple, who was soon to lay hands on him and cure his blindness.

St Alphonsus Liguori, while at Naples, visited in spirit Pope Clement XIV on his death-bed in Rome. St Ambrose, pontificating in Rome, assisted in spirit at the agony and death of St Martin of Tours. Pope St Pius V, on the day and at the moment at which the Christian army, led by Don John of Austria, gained its famous naval victory over the Turks at Lepanto, contemplated the sight from his window at the Vatican, and made known the good news to the pontifical treasurer, Bartolommeo Bussotti, who had just come to discuss business with him. Blessed Angelo, the Capuchin friar, from his cell at Acri in Italy, was likewise witness of the various incidents of the battle in which Prince Eugene vanquished the Turks at Belgrade.

We are also acquainted with the interviews at a distance between St Jane Chantal and St Francis de Sales, or those of the Venerable Mère Agnès and M. Olier. Innumerable similar facts are to be met with in the lives of the saints, in which they have always been explained by miracle. An explanation probable and suitable, it is true, but one that is not sufficient

[1] *Ezech.* viii. [2] 1 *Kings* ix 9.

to account for analogous facts, perhaps no less marvellous, met with in profane history.

Thus we read, in the life of Apollonius of Tyana, that this celebrated professor, during a lesson on philosophy at Ephesus, once suddenly stopped to cry out to the murderer who at that very moment was assassinating the tyrant Domitian at Rome: "Courage, Stephanus, kill the tyrant!" Whatever may be said as to the authenticity of this incident in the life of one of whom legends abound, we might cite a great number of others, which, being contemporary, are quite easy to verify. So numerous are they that several societies of scientists have been recently founded in order to impose a more rigorous check on them.

In England, since 1880, very serious inquiries have been conducted by the *Society for Psychical Research*, which counted among its active members men like Gladstone, Balfour, Ruskin, Alfred Russell Wallace, and among its corresponding members abroad, Taine, Ribot, Ch. Richet, and so on. The *Philosophical Review* gave an account of them in 1883, 1884, and 1885.

Now, from the first months of this inquiry, this Society had proved the undoubted authenticity of *seven cases* in which individuals, healthy of mind and above all suspicion of bad faith or fraud, had been warned of misfortunes that had happened to others, relatives or friends, at distances normally impossible to be surmounted by our senses. Incredulous scholars such as Schérer have ended by submitting to the testimony of the witnesses.

Some years afterwards, in 1900, the number of authentic facts collected by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore was raised to 702.[1] Advancing still further, other scientists attempted to reproduce at will these phenomena of telepathy or mental suggestion at a distance. Dr. Ochorowicz made 806 experiments, of which 341 were successful.[2] In France minds became rapidly interested in these questions. They were dealt with at length by MM. Ch. Richet and Dariex in the *Annales des sciences psychiques*, and discussed by the *Société des sciences psychiques*, founded by Canon Brettes, or by the *Académie des sciences psychiques*, founded by Mgr. Méric. Experiments were multiplied, the most remarkable of which were those at Le Havre by MM. Gibert, Janet, and Ochorowicz, in which were displayed a profusion of unheard-of precautions

[1] See *Phantasms of the Living*. [2] See *De la suggestion mentale*.

to forestall all fraud or to avert accidental coincidences. We should also mention the experiments made by MM. Bernheim and Liebault, in which they corresponded telepathically between Nancy and Coblentz, across a distance of 250 kilometres.

It would require volumes to explain in detail all these facts, which were related day by day in the reviews already cited, and, above all, in Mgr. Méric's *Revue du monde invisible*. We shall shortly give some examples, but it is evident from the mass of them that it is impossible—at least without being wholly sceptical—to deny from henceforth that the reality of these marvellous phenomena, or very many of them, has been clearly shown. Before seeking an explanation of them—as far as it is possible—we must begin by determining their nature more clearly, and fixing, according to their kinds, at least a provisional order or classification among them.

II. *Classification of these phenomena*

As we shall see, explanations have often miscarried because of an attempt to explain by one single theory phenomena which, though akin, are yet most dissimilar, but are confused under one same label, that of *telepathy*. We must therefore devote ourselves first of all to distinguishing them with great care, before seeking to explain them. Sometimes, in fact, *two minds*, or if it be preferred, *two brains*, seem to enter into communication, without apparent mediation, at greater or less distances apart; at others it *is a single mind*, one only person, who seems to see at a distance without the help of the senses, and to enter into communication with inanimate objects. We restrict the name *telepathy* to the first case, reserving that of *clairvoyance*, or *second sight*, for the second.

A few examples will be enough to enable their essential difference to be grasped and to prevent the inextricable confusion arising from the explanations in which flounder those who forget how to distinguish them.

1. *Telepathy*.—Here is a most simple case of telepathy, and one that it was given to the writer himself to verify and check in conditions of absolute certainty. Moreover, it is far from belonging to the sphere of privacy. Not only did the whole town of Angers, where it happened, resound with it, but also all the medical reviews, both in France and abroad, especially

after the communication concerning it which was made to the *Académie de médecine* in Paris.

Ludovic, the young son of Dr. X—, had the reputation of being able to read the thoughts of his mother, and the latter was able to suggest to him answers to questions most varied in character and greatly above his natural capacity. For example, the mother would open a book, place her finger on a word or figure, and ask the child what it was, and the latter, at some distance, would answer quite correctly. It is easy to understand how divers and most varied experiments were thus performed; they always obtained the same success of apparent divination.

The mother would suggest to her child, by thought only, without the help of voice, gesture, or other senses, the reply he should make to all the questions she put to him. Thus there was a real communication at a distance between them both, but it was in no way reciprocal. It was the child who seemed to read the thoughts of the mother and not she those of her son. There was but one seer here, the child, and—an important detail—his knowledge was entirely passive: it was received from the mother by way of suggestion, and to the extent to which she communicated it to him.

This passiveness very soon alarmed the family. In order to bring up a child and develop his intelligence and mental faculties, they must be exerted, be made to act: their passiveness and inertness would mean their atrophy. The little seven-year-old prodigy, exhibited in the salons, was thus in this state of affairs in danger of becoming a cretin or idiot. The father wisely hastened to separate the child from the mother—a painful separation certainly, but one made necessary because of this grave danger and also of several others easy to imagine—in order to have him given a normal education. From that time the phenomenon ceased.

Such is the *typical case* of telepathy. With it may easily be compared all the phenomena of *forebodings*, by which relatives or friends are suddenly warned, as by an invisible message, of some misfortune that has unexpectedly happened at a distance to someone dear to them. Here are some examples.

It is not uncommon for the wives of Breton sailors to experience an indefinable inward sensation at the moment of the shipwreck and death of the husband. This revelation seems to be the result of a sensible message which they receive passively, and gives them an absolute certainty.

At the time of the catastrophe of the *Bazar de la Charité*

at Paris on May 4, 1897, Dr. Guelliot informs us that analogous messages were received in the Ardennes,[1] and some years before, at the time of the fire at the Opéra-Comique, according to the testimony of Dr. Archambaud, these messages reached as far as Touraine.[2]

We would also note that these messages, which in the ordinary way are received in the form of images, may also be in the form of sounds or words. Thus a mother has been known to hear the cries of her child, fallen far away in some gully.[3] The phenomenon is still the same, a communication between two minds at a distance.

2. *Second sight.*—The phenomena of clairvoyance, or second sight, are very different. Here the mind of the seer is not passive but active. It does not receive a mysterious impression, a message from afar, but sets out to seek the unknown and finishes by seeing things invisible to the senses. Here are several examples chosen from among those which we ourselves have verified.

The *Société des sciences psychiques*, to which I belonged, occupied itself for a very long time with Mlle. C—, the famous Parisian voyant. It appointed a Commission composed of doctors and scholars to inquire into the marvellous facts attributed to her, and to examine her own person from the physiological and medical point of view. From this extremely curious inquiry, among a thousand cases of second sight, we select but one sole event as of use to our subject, a perfectly authenticated case. It is concerned with the ddenih treasure of Montpellier.

An old officer had died in this town without having indicated the hiding-place in which he had enclosed his small fortune, and the heirs were extremely surprised at finding none of his valuables, especially a 100-franc gold piece which the uncle had sometimes shown to his nephews. One of them, passing through Paris, astonished at all that public report was saying about the clairvoyance of Mlle. C—, decided to consult her. He related his trouble to her and asked for advice.

The seer demanded the most minute details, especially the street, the number of the house, the story, the description of the rooms, and so on. Furnished with all these indications Mlle. C— suddenly entered into her *second* or somnambulistic

[1] *Sciences occultes*, p. 142.
[2] *Revue du monde invisible*, 1st year, no. 7, p. 443.
[3] *Ibid.*, no. 2, p. 122.

state, and made a mental journey to Montpellier. After some hesitation she arrived at the street notified, stopped at the number, went upstairs, passed through the rooms described, recognized them—then, all of a sudden, raised the curtains of the bed on which the uncle had died, perceived a hiding-place in the wall, in this place a bundle of title-deeds, and on this bundle the famous 100-franc gold piece. The heir, who heard the seer's account, was both stupefied and convinced: and, doubtless after cordially and generously thanking her, he returned to Montpellier, where, in turn, but in reality, and not merely in spirit, he opened the hiding-place in the spot indicated and placed his hands on the hoard.

On returning from this meeting of the *Sciences psychiques*, half excited at its revelations and half sceptical, I met on my way my colleague, the Curé of Saint-Sulpice, M. l'Abbé Méritan, and hastened to give him an account of the wonderful history of the hidden treasure at Montpellier.

"Does that astonish you?" replied he. "Would you like me to tell you of another quite recent such event? And as it happened to one of the penitents in my parish, I can guarantee its absolute truth. It has to do with a poor little sempstress who had made up a beautiful silken robe for Baroness X— and had left it at her house on the day agreed. Some days afterwards the Baroness called on the sempstress to ask for her robe, and, refusing to accept her word, proclaimed her a liar and a thief. Full of tears, the poor child asked for her neighbours' advice. They recommended her to have recourse to the enlightenments of Mlle. C—. Hard pressed by her misfortune she finally decided to pay a visit which was repugnant to her, presented herself to the seer, and confided to her her grief.

"The latter, after hearing a description of the smallest details concerning the Baroness's house, the nature of the box—a cardboard hat-box—which enclosed the silken robe, and so on, entered her *second state*, travelled in spirit into the Baroness's rooms, ransacked every nook and corner, and suddenly perceived the famous hat-box in a closet where some maid must have deposited it, no doubt without the knowledge of her mistress. The poor little workgirl immediately ran to the house of the Baroness and asked and begged to be allowed to come in and visit the famous closet." It is unnecessary to complete in detail the story: the reader can imagine it. The silken robe was discovered, the poor little sempstress happily reinstated.

Not only did the Curé of Saint-Sulpice guarantee me this fact, but added that it was far from rare, and that during his long sojourn in the heart of Paris he had seen many others. Moreover, on the faith and word of so serious and experienced a colleague, I myself ended by believing in the testimony of the medical examiners of the *Société des sciences psychiques*.

It remains for us, if possible, to attempt some explanation of these wonderful yet undeniable facts.

III. *Attempt to explain telepathy*

Those who have not sufficiently distinguished telepathy from second sight, as we have just done, and have claimed to give an explanation common to them both, have fatally foundered in their enterprise because of this very confusion. In order to eschew this danger we shall venture on two different explanations responding to the two kinds of facts, so very different, even though they may possess the vague and generic resemblance of being visions or communications at a distance.

The first order of facts, that of telepathy, we shall once more exemplify by the case of the young seer of Angers, Ludovic, the son of Dr. X—. Having ourselves known this noble and most Christian family, we first of all, without any hesitation, discard all suspicion of *deceit*, quackery, or devilry, which cannot be thought of with regard to such worthy and pious persons. There is nothing here in common with the barnumism and conjuring of the fair nor with the mediums or somnambulists of the drawing-room.

As regards the hypothesis of *diabolism*, this also must be discarded without the least scruple. No doubt, with God's permission, the devil may occasionally intervene in the operations of the most honourable persons, even though not drawn thereto by any explicit or implicit invocation. But in that case the wicked angel is always betrayed by some token of lying or immorality such as it has been impossible to discover here. Besides—and this is enough to dispose of all doubt—as the child was cured by natural remedies, not by exorcism and prayer, his infirmity, like the remedies, was of the natural order. Increase of age alone was sufficient to effect a cure, which proves that it was a case of a pathological state.

In this typical case we are concerned with two persons, child and mother, or, if preferred, with two brains of extreme sensi-

tiveness, tuned to vibrate in unison in such a manner that one, the younger and more impressionable, becomes the echo of the other brain.

According to the *philosophic theory* of Aristotle and St Thomas, every idea is accompanied with a sensible image, and every mental image is a *qualitative* cerebral movement—that is to say, a vibration of cerebral molecules that produces in them a state of luminosity, sound, or the like. The sensation which is added thereto is nothing but the consciousness of this luminous or auditory image. The child, on receiving this image in its brain, becomes conscious of it, provided he is attentive, and consequently knows the answer that is suggested to him without having devised or even sought it.

If the child be inattentive or distracted, it may be that he will read the word suggested to him incorrectly, or, in other words, that he will not analyse with exactness all the details of his mental image. Immediately the mother would say " Attention," and the child would recollect himself, read within himself more attentively. This mental reading is, moreover, painful and tiring, and there are numerous examples of pains in the head and more serious accidents that have occurred as the result of it.

This explanation, directly inspired by the facts observed, in no way supposes that the child " reads the thoughts of his mother "—an untenable hypothesis, for direct communication of soul with soul, thought with thought, without any sensible sign, is contrary to our present nature—but only allows that the child takes cognizance of a luminous or sonorous image, communicated to its brain by another brain.

That which travels from brain to brain, then, is neither a spiritual thought nor even a sensation, but a luminous or sonorous vibration, a physical image which the consciousness in each brain, at the two terms of the course, transforms into an image that is felt, a perception. Thus, in like manner, that which travels in a telephone wire is not a thought, it is only an electric vibration which was *sonorous* and spoken in the membrane of the transmitter, and again becomes *sonorous* and heard at the other end of the wire, in the membrane of the receiver. One of the two agents translates the thought into vibration, and the other the vibration into thought. The expression *transmission of thought*, then, is only an expressive metaphor, most inexact if taken literally.

As regards the transmission of the luminous or sonorous vibration from one brain to another, this is the phenomenon

well known in physics under the name of *influence*. When two cords of a violin or piano, for example, are so strung as to vibrate in unison and give the same note, it suffices to make one of them vibrate for the other immediately and spontaneously to enter into vibration. It is enough, then, that a brain should think very strongly of some image for this image to be awakened by sympathy in another brain correctly adapted to vibrate in unison. Also, in order to be conscious of it, the second person has only to be attentive to that which passes within him.

All movements of nature, luminous, sonorous, electric, magnetic, and the like, are thus transmitted by influence like so many kinds of *wireless telegraphy*, but this name is now reserved to one wonderful application, that of the Hertzian electric waves. The difficulty was not to send them by means of signals, but to find an " eye " capable of seeing this invisible light, a receiver capable of receiving these signals and of vibrating in unison: a discovery of genius, due to a Frenchman, M. Branly, professor at the *Institut catholique* of Paris, and popularized in its practical application by an Italian, Signor Marconi. Here, in telepathy, the " eye " is none other than the individual consciousness in a brain sufficiently sensitive to vibrate in unison with another brain, the suggestion of which it receives and of which it becomes the echo.

The explanation which we have just put forward is not new. In 1896 the Abbé Gayraud maintained it with lustre before the *Société des sciences psychiques*, without himself being its inventor. Already—in a less precise way, it is true—it had been proposed at Nancy by Dr. Liebault, after his famous telepathic experiments between Nancy and Coblentz, and at Angers by Dr. X—, father of young Ludovic. Long before, in 1879, Fr. de Bonniot, in his work on *Le Miracle et ses contrefaçons*, timidly suggested it on pp. 380 and 383, and in an appendix (p. 400) ended by declaring it very probable.

We would add that every good scholastic philosopher already applied it to the mechanism of the external senses, in which all sensible movements are emitted and received by influence. It is enough to extend this mechanical explanation, already known to Aristotle, to a particular case, that of transmission from brain to brain, or of telepathy.

The principal *objections* this hypothesis has met with are three in number.

The *first* is drawn from the enormous distance at which two persons are able to enter into telepathic communication. Grant, it was said, that it may be so in the case of two speakers who see and touch each other; but at a distance of 250 kilometres, from Nancy to Coblentz, is not probable, it is supernatural.

To this difficulty wireless telegraphy has already replied that distance is a minor element. At short or long distances the phenomenon is the same. All that is required is to have instruments powerful or sensitive enough to carry the distance.

The true difficulty in such a communication would be to overcome the obstacles in its course and not to surmount the distance. We know, for instance, that mountains hinder or arrest wireless telegraphy. It is even said that a screen or an intercepting wall between Ludovic and his mother stopped communication. We quite recognize the seriousness of this difficulty without thinking it insoluble: it has already been solved as regards wireless telegraphy.

The *second* objection urges the *voluntary direction* in which the telepathic message seems to be sent towards such and such a particular person, relative or friend, residing in places not only very far away, but occasionally unknown to the sender. It is suggested that this cannot be explained except by the intervention of an intelligence and a will superior to man.

We reply by denying the hypothesis of voluntary direction. There is no fixed direction of the vibratory waves towards such and such a person, any more than in wireless telegraphy. These waves radiate like light in every direction. Every receiver found on their course will be able to pick them up if he is perfectly sensitive and tuned to vibrate in unison. It is only the rareness of such receivers which might give colour to the belief in the choice of recipients; yet this is only apparent. And if an effort of will be required on the part of the suggestor, it is to give greater intensity to his mental image, and therefore greater force to his message, and in no way to direct it towards a fixed person or place.

The *third* objection complains that our hypothesis in no way explains the phenomena of second sight. But it does not claim to wish to explain everything at once. Far from it. On phenomena that are essentially different, different explanations must be brought to bear. So we now hasten to approach this group of entirely new and still more mysterious facts.

IV. *Attempt to explain second sight*

In this new order of phenomena there are no longer two brains in telepathic relationship, vibrating in unison without the help of the five external senses, but one only brain, one only thought, which enters into contact with an inanimate object in order to discover and know it.

It is clear that here one of the two aerials of wireless telegraphy is lacking, and that, deprived of this essential organ, the telegraph is no longer able to work. The example of wireless telegraphy, so tempting when it was necessary to explain the echo of the maternal brain on that of the child, has no longer any meaning when we try to understand how the thought of Mlle. C—, in Paris, is able to enter into contact with the hidden treasure of Montpellier and discover it. We must then seek another theory.

Apart from a supernatural explanation—to which we shall return—scholars and philosophers have only been able to imagine three hypotheses: deceit, the theory of the double, and the psychical theory. Let us review them.

1. *Deceit* is a very convenient explanation, since it consists in denying the reality of the phenomena which embarrass us and which are held to be impossible because the mechanism of them is not understood.

As a matter of fact, it cannot be contested that conjurers and charlatans, with the aid of divers tricks, some more ingenious than others, which it is not for us to explain here, and above all by the help of clever confederates, have succeeded in imitating the facts of clairvoyance or second sight. Folk such as Robert Houdin, Donato, and Cumberland are to-day legion, both on our public halls and in the great fashionable circles, where thoughts the most secret and facts the most hidden, present, past, or to come, are foretold.

But is everything deceit and legend in all that has been said on this subject? We do not believe it. And when we see learned societies, exclusively given over to the study of psychical phenomena, being multiplied in England, France, Germany, and all the countries of the Old and New World, it is impossible for us for a single instant to admit that all these scholars, all these thinkers, among whom we recognize the most illustrious names in letters and science, can be only either

impostors or dupes. Furthermore, the gift of second sight, which usually ceases with the ageing of the seer, seems rather to correspond with a special physiological state—whilst deceit is found at every age. The explanation of deceit, then, is much too convenient and simple; it is notoriously insufficient, and we must examine more serious hypotheses.

2. *The theory of the double.*—Phenomena of second sight always take place when the seer is " out of himself," in a state of somnambulism or hypnosis, *in second state*, whereas this condition is not required in the case of telepathy, at least in the elementary cases which we have taken as types. It has thus appeared as though the person of the seer seemed to double itself and cause its double to travel in search of an unknown object. It is this that has to be explained.

From the earliest times the phenomena of alienation and of division of consciousness have suggested to philosophers the barbarous hypothesis of the *double*, mysteriously welcomed by the Kabbalists, the theosophists, and all the initiates of occultism and spiritism. This Oriental tradition is almost the only one theory common to-day to these innumerable sects of occult science.

It teaches that man is composed of three substances: the body, the soul, and a third intermediate substance—neither body nor spirit—which unites them, and bears different names according to the different schools: perisprit, astral body, psychic body, phantom of the living, fluidic or luminous double, plastic mediator, and so on. This surfeit of names alone is enough to show the anomalous variety of notions and the confusion of ideas ruling with regard to this so-called double. If its definition be obscure and infinitely variable, its function is no less mysterious. It consists chiefly in allowing of the twofold manifestation of a person, who, while remaining in a given place, can make his double travel far away, in order to see, hear, feel, and act instead of the person himself.

The hypnotized subject is thus able to direct his fluidic double towards another place and very far-away objects. He envelops them in his fluid, surrounds them on every side, penetrates them, fathoms them, ransacks them, and searches out all their secrets. Such is the theory which the high priest of occultism, the famous Papus (Dr. Encausse), expounded to us with disconcerting conviction in his report to the *Société des sciences psychiques*, December 1, 1897. And it may be noted that there is no limit to these travels. Thus one famous

occultist was able to describe to us in detail his voyage to the planet Saturn!

We would not insist on these ridiculous fancies of occultism were it not that these errors are spreading more and more among the masses of the people, and even among certain Catholics sufficiently credulous to think they see in them "the scientific catechism of the future"! In order to put them on their guard against this peril we sum up in a few words the manifest absurdities of such a doctrine.

(i) The *nature* of this double is unintelligible. If corporal, it cannot bind body with spirit; if spiritual, it cannot bind spirit with body; if both spiritual and corporal, its notion is contradictory; if neither one nor the other, neither spirit nor matter, neither simple nor extended, it is absurd.

(ii) The *role* attributed to it of being able to represent body and spirit, although it is neither one nor the other, of travelling for them to a distance while thus separated from them, is nothing but a tissue of contradictions. If it separates itself from them, then it is not necessary for their union. Once separate, how can it exist alone, act alone, feel and think without the soul? Finally, how can it still remain in communication with the person from whom it is separated and inform him from a distance of all that is happening elsewhere? Once again, this hypothesis is but a chaos of crude contradictory ideas, of absurd fictions, unworthy of any serious thinker.

Let us add—in addressing certain Catholics—that this theory is contrary to the teaching of the Church as to the *substantial* union of the soul and body, a doctrine defined by the Council of Vienne, the fifth Council of the Lateran, and solemnly repeated by Pius IX and Leo XIII. It is not heretical to deny the philosophical theory of *matter* and *form*, but it is so to deny the *substantial* union of the soul and body, and to profess their *accidental* union by means of a third substance, as the theory of the *double* claims.

With this theory may be classed that of MM. Jules Bois and Baraduc, who admit not *one only* but a *multitude* of mediating spiritual entities between the body and the soul, all of them unconscious, which they call the sub-ego, and which are said to be lodged in what they call the "caves of the soul." This amusing psychology borders on phantasmagoria and needs no refutation. The occultists themselves have not spared it the criticisms and derision which it deserves.[1]

[1] See *Journal du magnetisme*, no. 15, 1st qr. 1897.

3. *The psychic theory.* — Here we leave the absurd in order to approach an hypothesis, certainly bold, but presented to us under the patronage of St Augustine, St Gregory, the entire Platonic school, and St Teresa herself. We shall expound it without in any way diminishing its specious and seductive arguments, yet not forgetting to point out the serious objections of St Thomas and his school.

This theory supposes that human souls, being spiritual, can, without detaching themselves from the body, be naturally in communication either with pure spirits, or with one another, or with the material world, without the help of the organs of the five senses, or of any nervous fluid or vibratory medium whatsoever.

No doubt all these great doctors recognized that this way of communicating outwardly is not a *normal state* for our souls, actually linked to the body. But however abnormal it may be, it is far from being impossible. It will even become normal after death, when the soul is loosed from its organic chains. Now if our souls thus act after death, why not also some minutes before, in that mysterious moment of the agony when the soul detaches itself, and little by little the fetters of its captivity become loosened ? Still more, if our souls can begin to act freely at the moment of agony, why not at certain times during life, such, for instance, as those of lethargy, swooning of the senses, and in sleep, whether natural or hypnotic, which so nearly resemble the appearance of death ? If there is one fact in biology that is certain it is that in the ordinary way death does not break in upon the whole body suddenly, but gradually, and, as it were, by successive stages. There is, then, not an intermediate state between life and death, but between the complete life of the soul freed from the organs of sense and its complete life in those organs.

Therefore there might be for the soul an intermediate state between the knowledge of pure spirits and knowledge through the material organs of sense. The soul, whilst still bound to the organs, above all for the lower operations of the animal and vegetative life, might begin to free itself from them for operations of a higher order.

This is what St Teresa calls " the separation of the *spirit* from the *soul*," so that the soul, while still remaining in the body, might be able through its *spirit* to radiate far and wide, " as the sun," she says, " [which] does not leave his place in the heavens, yet his rays have power to reach the earth." It

is true that she adds with modesty: "I do not understand what I am talking about. . . ."[1]

In this way, according to these doctors, the phenomena of second sight, so well authenticated in sleep or hypnosis, would be explained. St Gregory[2] goes so far as to affirm that "the soul which approaches the moment of death can even foresee naturally certain future things, by the subtlety of its spiritual nature"—*subtilitate suae naturae*—and St Augustine[3] extends this power of the spiritual soul to all other cases in which it becomes freed from the senses and in the measure in which it becomes so freed: *Secundum quod a sensibus corporis abstrahitur, competit futura praevidere.* Here we certainly have a gift of second sight or purely spiritual intuition without the co-operation of the senses.

What is to be thought of this explanation?

Certainly it is very convenient and of enticing simplicity, and from the standpoint of the Platonic and Cartesian hypothesis it is entirely plausible.

But is this hypothesis itself likely? Is it probable that the union of the soul with the body is a violent state and *against nature*, to the extent that knowledge through our sensible organs would be no longer natural to man and knowledge outside the senses, on the contrary, alone conformable to his nature?

According to plain common sense, is not this to reverse at will the order of things and to place everything upside down? If the Platonic hypothesis be true, we must not be astonished to see and hear without our eyes and ears, but, on the contrary, be astonished at seeing and hearing in spite of our eyes and ears, since these are an obstacle and fetter contrary to the nature of our soul: second sight, far from being an abnormal state, would alone be the normal state of our mind.

[1] *Castle*, 6th M. This is also the explanation given by Görres: "Man is not enclosed within his body to such a degree that his eyes cannot, in certain circumstances, pierce its envelope, penetrate to the depth of things and consider that which is hidden beneath the coarse veil of outward phenomena. This faculty, in the lower degrees, is limited to material objects. . . . At a higher degree man may sometimes contemplate the mind of another man . . . and souls separated from their bodies . . ." (*La mystique*, vol. iii, pp. 291 *ff.*). "Sometimes the seer sees at great distances and even as far as America" (*ibid.*, p. 296).

[2] *Dialogues*, bk. iv, ch. xxvi.

[3] *De Genes. ad litt.*, bk. xii, ch. xii.

The philosophy of St Thomas, which is that of the great common sense of humanity, has not been able, then, to accept the inverted view of the Platonic school. If God has given our soul eyes in order to see luminous objects, ears to hear music and speech—in a word, senses by which to perceive—it is because the nature of that soul requires them and cannot do without them.

Moreover, according to the Thomist school, never, either in this life or in the other, before the resurrection of the body, will the soul be able to enter into communication with the material world in a direct manner, but only indirectly, through the mediation of images or intelligible species which God will communicate to it at his good pleasure. "The separated soul," says St Thomas, "knows by means of species which it receives under the influence of the divine light, in the same way," he adds, "as the angels and pure spirits."[1]

This law is assuredly the more probable. The separated soul, being unable to see by the eyes, or hear by the ears, or feel by the touch, has lost all natural means of communication with the material world. There no longer remains to it other than an indirect means, that of contemplating all in the divine light, in that central mirror of primary causality in which God discovers to it what it pleases him of his secrets.

But this impotence of the separated soul only concerns the material world, for in the spiritual world of souls or minds it is more or less at home, and may there read directly, at least in the measure in which these souls desire it.[2]

Not that St Thomas wishes to deny or to fail to recognize the occasional marvellous transformations produced in the faculties of our soul by those abnormal states in which it seems to be more or less freed from the senses, such as certain cases of slow agony or of sleep, whether natural or hypnotic. Far

[1] *Summa Theol.*, I, q. lxxxix, a. 3.

[2] "There are two obstacles," says St Thomas (I, q. lvii, a. 4), "which prevent our soul from reading the thoughts of other souls: first, because of the *coarseness* of its body: *propter grossitiem corporis*; again, because of the will of these souls to keep their thoughts secret. The first obstacle will be removed by the resurrection of the glorious body, and souls will then be able to communicate with one another; the second will remain, and already exists in the communication of angels with one another." Nevertheless, St Thomas admits that the *grossities*, this weight of the body and of the senses, may be naturally *reduced*, either at the moment of death or in sleep and certain analogous states (II-II, q. clxxii, a. 1, etc)—all the more so, then, in the supernatural states of mysticism.

from it. He proclaims the exceptional keenness of certain of our faculties, acquired at that time, either by the concentration of the whole activity of the soul on the same sense and on one single image, or else through the silence and anaesthesia of the other senses, in accordance with the law of contrasts which disposes all the attention on one same object.

But this transformation, however astonishing it may be in sleep, does not go so far as to give the soul new faculties or an essentially different manner of knowing. There is then only a difference of degree and not of nature between the faculty of knowing during wakefulness and during hypnotic sleep, whereas the Platonic theory supposes therein a new nature, that of seeing without eyes, hearing without ears, by the single power of the mind.

St Thomas, in *summing up* his teaching, tells us that in these abnormal states in which the soul is freed from the senses and sensible things, *quando abstrahitur a corporalibus*, it becomes wonderfully apt at two things:

(i) First, in perceiving the smallest movements, the lightest impressions, imperceptible in the normal state. But this subtlety of our senses has nothing in common with the supra-sensible knowledge, independent of the senses, of the Platonic school.

(ii) Also, adds the holy doctor, in this state it becomes more apt "to receive the revealing influence of higher spirits."[1]

This last trait is enlightening, for it opens to us new horizons. According to him, as to ordinary common sense, there is no vision without eyes, no hearing without ears, no sensation without the senses, but there may be "revealing influence of spirits," good and bad: it is this that remains for us to explain.

V. *Supernatural explanation, diabolical or divine*

We are only forced to have recourse to a supernatural explanation if all natural explanations have failed. Is it so in this case? As regards *telepathy*, we have encountered an hypothesis which, in spite of its boldness, is, in the main, plausible; and as regards *second sight*, whilst rejecting the Platonic theory, we have rendered due homage to the mighty geniuses, both Christian and pagan, who uphold it. It would

[1] *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. clxxii, a. 1.

then be an exaggeration to say that all natural explanation had wholly failed.

Let us go further, and, assuming the impossible, suppose that we have discovered a completely satisfactory natural hypothesis. Even in such an imaginary case all supernatural intervention would not necessarily be excluded. Far from it. When one studies, not a single case of telepathy or second sight but the general mass of occultist and spiritist phenomena with which they are too often mixed up, the suggestion of *supernatural diabolism* forces itself, on the contrary, more and more on the mind and becomes impossible to deny. In fact, it is one of the habitual characteristics of the deceits of the devil to disguise himself through second causes, only intervening from time to time in phenomena otherwise natural, but unusual, marvellous, and capable of attracting the curiosity of the multitude, or of scholars, whom he desires to lead astray. He hides himself behind natural agents in order to make believe that all is natural and that the devil has no part therein.

In this way, magnetism, table-turning, the wonders of mediums, have caused heads to turn, suggested follies to simple minds and even to distinguished thinkers; they have even been the means of loss of faith to good Christians. Now let the culprit be sought, and it will always be found to be the evil spirit, Satan, disguised as an angel of light.

Let us be allowed to cite one fact alone which we studied at length at the *Société des sciences psychiques*. The Parisian seer of whom we have already spoken, Mlle. C—, said and believed that she was assisted by a spirit who claimed to be the angel Gabriel, but who might more correctly be given another name. Now if she were interrogated in order to study the mechanism of her second sight more closely, it would be very soon noticed that her mind *makes pretence* of travelling to Montpellier, for example, to look for treasure, or to Paris, in the apartments and closets of Baroness X—, but that it does not travel there at all. All the mind does is simply to see and decipher the pictures or images which the angel causes to pass successively in her dream. It is, then, assisted by a superhuman being, of higher intelligence and knowledge, who reveals to it facts hidden from the eyes of ordinary mortals.

This so-called angel is even able to suggest to the seer certain *predictions*. Thus, it announced to her, several months in advance, in grotesque doggerel rhyme, but with startling truth, the horrors of the fire at the *Bazar de la Charité:*

Près des Champs-Elysées,
Je vois un endroit pas élevé
Qui n'est pas pour la piété,
Mais qui en est rapproché
Dans un but de charité
Qui n'est pas la vérité . . .
Je vois le feu s'élever
Et les gens hurler . . .
Des chairs grillées,
Des corps calcinés,
J'en vois par pelletées.[1]

This catastrophe was the result of a crime. We were horror-struck witnesses of it, and we never doubted its premeditation. Now the devil, who had inspired it and knew how far he could count on his accomplices, could indeed afford the luxury of such a prophecy, which made great stir in Paris at the time, although it could not have been fully understood until after the sinister event.

This possible and even probable—not to say certain—intervention of the devil, so aptly called " the ape of God," in the marvels, perhaps natural, of telepathy and second sight, has its counterpart in the *divine interventions* among our saints, and this is the point of view that has most interest for apologetics.

The gift of clairvoyance or second sight—however suspicious among the somnambulists of our fairs and public places, the hypnotized in our theatres and hospitals, the lucid and extra-lucid somnambulists of our great cities—assumes a wholly different character among our saints. In this case the gift cannot be judged apart from the virtues and other supernatural gifts which precede it, accompany it and follow it, and make up its whole meaning.

If the saint has received a mission from God in his Church—whether to save the barque of Peter, like Pius V, or to reform the religious orders or the clergy, like St Teresa or St Vincent de Paul, or to convert the people and transform souls, like St Francis Xavier or the Curé d'Ars—he also receives from God all the marvellous gifts which contribute thereto so powerfully, including the gift of reading hearts, discerning spirits, foreseeing and seeing at a distance. These gifts, even though they be natural in themselves and arise from secret

[1] A prediction made in May, 1896, in a seance at the house of Mme. la Comtesse de Maillé. The fire took place May 4, 1897.

forces of nature, are none the less a supernatural favour from God, either through the supernatural end which he assigns to them, or the physiological conditions in which he permits these forces to be exercised.

Thus, for instance, in order to make use of them, our saints do not need to be hypnotized or to become somnambulists, nor to enter the "second state." It is always in a state of waking and in full possession of themselves that they see the most hidden secrets and foresee the future. In this the saints have nothing in common with the neuropathic somnambulists of our amphitheatres, the unbalanced hysterical subjects in our hospitals. Moreover, there is nothing that authorizes us to think that they might have become clairvoyants without a divine mission and intervention.

The more clairvoyance is deemed insufficient of itself to prove the sanctity of the seer, the more the sanctity of the seer, once demonstrated, suffices to prove the providential and supernatural character of the clairvoyance. If the mysterious forces of nature may be awakened naturally in certain pathological cases, or by the power of the devil, there is nothing to prevent them from being so through divine intervention, when God judges it useful for the saint's mission or for the manifestation of his sanctity. Thus it is that neither diabolical counterfeits nor the mysterious analogies of nature are able to tarnish the glory of the saints nor to diminish in any way the high idea we have formed of their sanctity: sanctity rests on quite a different foundation than the marvellous.

Two practical conclusions flow from this theory.

Whatever be the philosophical hypothesis adopted—with greater or less likelihood—in order to explain clairvoyance or second sight naturally, it is certain that in practice they may *easily be diabolical*, as we have shown, and this grave danger, joined to that of the exploitation of the multitude by unscrupulous charlatans, amply justifies the repeated prohibition of the Church against the consulting of seers with regard to facts which, though *actual*, are inaccessible, and, even more, with regard to events *to come;* in the latter, diabolism or charlatanism are unquestionable and without excuse. The *faithful*, therefore, may never have recourse to clairvoyance except in the case of those persons whose sanctity is fully recognized.

With regard to the *director*, his conduct is regulated by the

rule of Benedict XIV: to judge of the supernatural character of these phenomena by the sanctity of those who experience them. Consequently, if he does not find in them the practice of heroic virtue, he ought greatly to distrust their visions, their counsels, and their influence. Even when, against all possibility, he might have the certainty of being in the presence of a purely natural gift and of not having to fear the illusions either of the imagination or of the devil, he ought still to discountenance its exercise, which might easily lead to more complete derangement and to madness.

§ 12

Infused knowledge

Holy Scripture records a number of *instances* of infused supernatural aptitude for science or art. The first is that of Adam and Eve, who came from the hands of the Creator with every aptitude and all knowledge necessary or useful for existence. In the words of *Ecclesiasticus*, " God gave them counsel, and a tongue, and eyes, and ears, and a heart to devise: and he filled them with the knowledge of understanding. He created in them the science of the spirit, he filled their heart with wisdom, and showed them both good and evil. He set his eye upon their hearts to show them the greatness of his works: that they might praise the name which he hath sanctified: and glory in his wondrous acts, that they might declare the glorious things of his works."[1]

The first trial which Adam made of this innate knowledge on all the beings of creation was to confer a suitable name on each of the animals which God brought before him. This he could not have done, as Bossuet so well remarks, without knowing their natures and the differences between them, as well as the roots of the words and the various expressions belonging to the language that he made use of and which God had taught him.[2] King Solomon is one of the most brilliant examples of infused knowledge and wisdom. He was able to discourse on all things—on plants, from the cedars of Libanus to the hyssop on the wall; on all animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. People came from every country to hear him, and we know

[1] Eccli. xvii 5-8.
[2] Bossuet, *Elév. sur les myst.*, 5[e] *sem.*, 1[re] *élévat.*

how the Queen of Saba was seized with wonder as she listened to him.[1]

At Pentecost the gift of tongues was given to the apostles. They spoke them at once without having learnt them, and announced the Gospel to all the people gathered at Jerusalem for the feast of the Pasch, and all were astounded and filled with admiration at hearing them make known in every tongue the praises of God. *Stupebant autem omnes et mirabantur ad invicem dicentes: quidnam vult hoc esse? . . . Audivimus eos loquentes nostris linguis magnalia Dei.*[2] This wonderful gift of infused aptitude and knowledge has never ceased in the Church throughout the ages, but it has been distributed in diverse measures and infinite variety.

Several poor nuns, unable to read or write, like St Catherine of Siena, St Rose of Lima, Blessed Osanna of Mantua, who on account of this ignorance were not able to recite the divine office in choir or correspond by letter with eminent directors or holy persons, learnt in a supernatural manner to read and write. Others, such as St Catherine de Ricci, learnt to say the rosary or to recite the canonical office by the same means. St Catherine of Alexandria, patroness of philosophers, was undoubtedly assisted by supernatural lights in the victorious controversy she sustained against the fifty sophists who were enlisted against her by the Emperor Maximin. The immense knowledge that has immortalized the name of Albert the Great was to a great extent a free gift of God, who, in order to convince him of this, withdrew it from him during the last three years of his life. His disciple St Thomas often declared that God alone was his teacher in the acquisition of natural and divine knowledge, which he possessed in so marvellous a degree. His labour, begun in tears, fasting and prayer, was continued in like manner at the foot of his crucifix, and when he was checked by formidable difficulties he would knock at the door of the tabernacle and there find the solution to his problems and the answer to the most embarrassing objections.

To other saints, again, like the brothers Cosmas and Damian, is attributed an infused knowledge of medicine, but it is no less probable that the cures brought about by them were even more the effects of their prayer and sanctity than of their medical science. But if God occasionally deigns to infuse profane science, he more often prefers to communicate the

[1] *III Reg.* iv 33 [2] *Act.* ii 11-12.

science of supernatural truths to the purest and holiest souls. It is above all in this way that his grace is the source of incomparable enlightenment.

It is not rare to meet persons without profane culture, yet raised to the heights of the perfect life, who understand more than philosophers and theologians concerning God, his nature and his works, his mercy and justice, his work in our souls, our Lord Jesus Christ, his sorrowful and glorious mysteries, his divine sacraments, his eucharistic life, and who have very lofty, occasionally prophetic, lights on the destinies of the Church and the march of events in the world. Men who hardly knew how to read, like St Joseph of Cupertino, or simple women, like St Hildegarde or St Colette, were consulted by scholars and masters in theology, who wondered at the wisdom of their replies and the abundance of their lights, from which they gathered great profit. St Hildegarde was even consulted as to certain difficulties drawn from the books of the Old and New Testament, and although unable to read the text, she understood the sense of it marvellously and learnedly explained it.

But it is above all in the domain of mystical theology that our saints are masters. It is there that they are at home. Mysticism being an experimental science, they alone are able to furnish the materials, to tell us what they have experienced in their intelligence, in their hearts, in all their senses and in their very bodies, in proportion as they have climbed this mysterious ladder of mystical ascent. As each one of its degrees is a gift of God, they are like so much infused knowledge, in which all our human art is powerless to perform or understand anything. Not only have their mystical experiences furnished all the materials of this knowledge, but they have been interpreted, explained, and synthesized into a body of teaching, by the supernatural lights which accompanied them.

It is enough to read the works of Dionysius the Mystic, of St Bonaventure, of St Teresa, or of St Catherine of Siena and St John of the Cross, to grasp the fact that this stupendous monument of mystical theology could not spring from a human brain or be devised by man; it could only spring from the heart of God and from the splendours of his revelations.

It is useless to insist at greater length on the evident and indisputable fact of infused knowledge. The *real difficulty* would be to determine the respective limits of the natural and

the supernatural, to state the precise point at which human effort ceases and the intervention of divine light begins. Undoubtedly the difficulty here is very great; it is often even insoluble. But what need is there for us to fix with exactness the boundaries between shadow and light? It is enough for us to know that the existence of the light is as certain as that of the darkness. The rest is quite useless for life's guidance, and would be a mere curiosity which more often it is better not to seek to satisfy.

Occasionally, for instance, there may be found a species of parrot-like memory, more or less unconscious, in the manifestation of knowledge, above all with regard to the gift of languages. Thus we have seen that a poor girl, in an access of fever, spoke Greek, Latin, and even Hebrew, without ever having learnt the least notion of them, not even the alphabet. The brain of this poor child, still young, ended, from the frequency of their utterance, by becoming impressed with them like the soft wax of a graphophone, and the unintelligent repetition of these oratorical pieces in an access of fever was the result of pure mechanism and certainly not of the gift of tongues.

The speaking of unknown languages, with understanding and knowledge, will ever remain, as the Church has taught, a supernatural gift, an infused aptitude, which the devil is able to imitate, even better than is the parrot-like voice, but his counterfeits are easy to unmask.

CHAPTER II

MARVELLOUS PHENOMENA OF THE AFFECTIVE ORDER

OUR plan.—The most important marvellous phenomenon of the *affective* order[1] is that of *ecstasy*, around which gravitate several other secondary and accidental phenomena, either of the same order, such as stigmatization, symbolic wounds, wounds of love, or of the purely physical order, such as levitation, radiance of the face and body, aerial flight, luminous or odoriferous effluvia, and so on. We group these under the term *marvellous complements of ecstasy* in order to treat them separately.

Let us begin by studying ecstasy. After having stated the *psycho-physiological problem* which it raises, we will give a *description* of it, and afterwards examine whether it is permissible to confuse it with other *pathological* or *natural* phenomena, as unbelievers have claimed.

§ 1

Psycho-physiological ecstasy: the problem

We have already dealt with ecstasy as a religious phenomenon of mystical theology, and we have seen that it is the third degree of mystical prayer or of passive union of the soul with God, corresponding to the sixth Mansion of St Teresa's *Interior Castle*. It remains for us to consider it as a *psycho-physiological* and marvellous phenomenon, for the study of it interests not only the theologian, but also the philosopher, whether psychological or moral, and even in a minor degree the physiologist and the physician. Such is our new point of

[1] "Although man may be enraptured in accordance with *intellectual* force, nevertheless, because the *appetitive* power can be a cause of rapture and is sometimes thus moved, it is according to reason to say that this effect is related to it" (St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxv, a. 2). Nevertheless, it is neither pure understanding nor pure will, but only in so far as they are provoked, that is the cause of rapture. Thus, *e.g.*, admiration—in the scholastic sense—is an intellectual *emotion*. All our faculties are, in fact, susceptible of agreeable or disagreeable emotions according to whether they operate more or less well or badly.

view; one which has so vivid an interest for contemporary apologetics.

During the whole period of its history until the present time the Catholic Church has constantly regarded ecstasy—we speak of true ecstasy, the ecstasy of the saints—as something supernatural, sacred, and worthy of all respect from us. St Paul, the greatest of the doctors of the Church, assures us that he himself had been rapt in ecstasy unto " the third heaven," and through this lofty favour was put in mysterious communication with the divinity. To refuse to believe his word would be to refuse to believe in the inspiration of Holy Writ; it would also be to revolt against the authority of the Church, which, throughout the ages, has not ceased to canonize and place on her altars a great number of other saints, favoured like St Paul with divine ecstasy.

It is true that these heavenly favours have never been the direct cause of canonization, and that, very far from proving the sanctity of these persons by ecstasy, it is, on the contrary, their sanctity, made manifest by the heroic degree of their virtue, that has proved the divine character of their ecstasy, as we shall have care to explain in its place, in accordance with Benedict XIV; but it is none the less true that the Church has recognized and openly proclaimed, not only the abstract possibility, but the certain and undoubted fact, of the supernatural and divine ecstasy of several of the saints; to deny it would be to deny the faith itself and to cease to be a Christian.

Now this marvellous phenomenon of divine ecstasy, which from our Christian education we are accustomed to regard as the most noble, delicate, and pure heavenly gift of our mystic saints, has been denied, travestied, and odiously scoffed at by a crowd of contemporary rationalists, scholars, and philosophers.

On the one hand, *materialistic scholars*, physiologists and physicians, have claimed to see in ecstasy nothing but a *pathological case* of neurosis bordering on madness. Men such as Lemoine, Maury, Morel, Lelut, Charcot, Paul Bert, have never ceased to repeat that ecstasy is a kind of madness. It is the materialist's watchword. Even the more conscientious physicians, such as Brierre de Boismont, have scarcely dared to raise their voices against the official teaching, or to endeavour to distinguish two kinds of ecstasy, physiological and morbid. " The first of these," this doctor declares, " is that of the prophets, the saints, the philosophers, and has been only

the result of their profound meditations, the sudden illumination of their thoughts, an extraordinary intuition."[1] Here, indeed, is a praiseworthy distinction, a beginning of the truth, which we must develop and complete, for it is still far from sufficient.

On the other hand, after the attack of scholars has come that of *philosophers*, both psychological and moral, who have not scrupled to affirm the "immorality" of divine ecstasy, on the wholly unlooked-for plea that it is "soul-suicide," a "degeneration" of our most noble faculties, the understanding and will. The conclusion, to which, it is true, the greater number demur, would be that we must look upon St Paul, St Augustine, St Teresa, St Francis of Assisi, St Ignatius, and the greatest of our saints, who have been the light of the world and the glory of humanity no less than of Christianity, as "deficient," "degenerates," and "suicides"! Here we have a mental aberration the causes of which must be examined, but which we are content for the moment to stigmatize in the slightly modified words of Fontaine: "The more degenerate of the two is not the one they think."

The refutation of this outrage has been effected with a master hand by Henri Joly in the pages of his *Psychology of the Saints*. It is indeed a pity that this estimable Catholic writer was not able to refute with the same vigour the first error, that of the physiological physicians, in which ecstasy was confused with neurosis, and that, in his desire to make timely concessions to the "scientific" spirit of our contemporaries, unfortunate phrases such as the following were allowed to escape him: "Between a somnambulist and an ecstatic the difference is not great."[2] "Ecstasy evidently constitutes a distinct disorder of the nervous system: there are also many alienists who see therein one of the phases of catalepsy."[3] "God might have acted on his saints through sickness by directing it to supernatural ends, while still leaving it to be developed according to natural laws."[4]

Assuredly not! Divine ecstasy cannot be a pathological crisis developing according to the natural laws of sickness, to which God assigns only a supernatural end, such as the conversion of infidels at the sight, or the foundation of religious orders, or the personal sanctification of the sick man. These are concessions which we shall never make, convinced as

[1] Brierre de Boismont, *Des hallucinations*, p. 305.
[2] *L'Imagination*, p. 64. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 68. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 71, note.

we are that between a somnambulist or cataleptic and a true ecstatic there is more than a difference of end or of degree—an essential difference, either from the inner and psychological point of view, or from the outward, physiological and medical.

Others, again, even among *Catholics*, have thought themselves justified in conceding to rationalists that divine ecstasy might be a phenomenon natural in itself, brought about by an excessive effort of attention on the part of the contemplative to religious images or ideas, like the so-called ecstasies of philosophers, scientists, or artists of genius. This opinion we must discuss.

Finally, the most recent opponents of the supernatural character of the ecstasies of the saints have urged the new psychological theories of the *subconscious*, and seek to find in unknown forces, bubbling in the depths of subconsciousness, a natural explanation of ecstasy. It is for us to weigh their arguments carefully.

But to *proceed in order* with so complex a discussion, we shall begin by a summary though amply sufficient *description* of true or supernatural ecstasy. Afterwards it will be easier for us to establish a striking parallel from it, whether with the psychological phenomena of delirium and *madness*, or with the false ecstasy of neuropathy—*cataleptic*, *hysterical*, and *somnambulistic*—or again, with the so-called *natural* ecstasies of philosophers and scholars. Finally, we shall end by examining the system that would endeavour to explain ecstasy naturally by the explosion of the mysterious forces of *subconsciousness*.

§ 2

Description of divine ecstasy

For this description we will address ourselves to St Teresa. Her experimental competency, clearness, depth of psychological analysis, truthfulness, and perfect good faith are neither open to question nor contested by anyone, even among our opponents. " The autobiography of St Teresa," writes M. Ribot, " may inspire us with full confidence. It is a confession made by order of the spiritual power, it is the work of a sensitive mind very gifted in observation, knowing how to wield her language to express the finest shades."[1]

[1] Ribot, *Psychologie de l'attention*, p. 143. M. Delacroix says the same of our great mystics: " Their systematic power and their psycho-

All the descriptive features which follow, then, will be borrowed from St Teresa, notably from her *Life*, written by herself, which we shall occasionally quote, word for word, or which we shall summarize in order not to pass beyond the space allotted to this study.

Now, in reading this, the first point which strikes us is that ecstasy is composed of *two distinct elements*, although these are united by a bond of causality: the one element inward and invisible, of which the contemplative alone is conscious; the other outward and visible, which may be verified by all witnesses.

The first, of the psychological order, but supernatural, consists in a lofty intuition of a transcendent object accompanied with a most sweet and powerful emotion, inclining the will to acts of the most heroic virtue; this is the positive and essential element.

The second, of the physiological and natural order, is a very special sleep, producing complete alienation of the senses with muscular rigidity, which is the effect or rebound on the body of the high vision of the soul:[1] this is the negative and accidental element: it is not absolutely indispensable, for God may, by a miracle, preserve ecstatics from it. He even always preserves the seer from it in the higher stage of transforming union or mystical marriage by miraculously fortifying nature against all feebleness. Thus our Lord was able to enjoy the beatific vision without any alienation of the senses, and so it will be with the blessed in heaven after the resurrection of the body. This alienation of the senses is only due, in fact, to the powerlessness of our mortal nature, which is not capable of withstanding the mystical vision of God without sinking. It is then not directly a mystical gift, and has nothing miraculous about it, but is entirely natural; moreover, it varies with the individual sensitiveness and temperament of each ecstatic, as we shall show in due course.

Nevertheless, it is to this second element, although so inferior and accessory to the first, that scholars, imitating common parlance, have given the exclusive name of *ecstasy*, either because they do not know the first or because the second alone is accessible to their observation, the only one which strikes the

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logical refinement guarantee to us their intelligence; their eager proselytism and the vast expansion of their religious life witness their activity and depth of feeling."

[1] St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxv, a. 2; Suarez, *De relig.*, II, c. xv, n. 5.

eye and impresses it with astonishment. And as this suspension or unconsciousness of the senses and movements of the animal life is a natural phenomenon, wholly analogous to—we do not say identical with—other pathological cases of unconsciousness or anaesthesia, we already foresee the deeply regrettable confusions into which the misuse of this word *ecstasy* may lead freethinking theorists.[1]

We must protest, then, against this improper terminology, and, in order to avoid all ambiguity, we not only refuse the name *ecstasy* to simple unconsciousness, but to all unconsciousness of the senses that has not as its cause eminent contemplation, bestowing on the soul an increased activity of the higher faculties, the understanding and will. Such an unconsciousness, which would have nothing good in it, would be morbid, brought about by some form of neurosis, and certainly not ecstatic.

Thus understood, in a wide sense ecstasy ought to be *subdivided* into natural and supernatural, and the latter again into divine and diabolical, according to whether it has as its cause nature, God, or the devil.

Let us begin by a description of the *outward element*, that most accessible to the sight of every observer, leaving St Teresa to speak for us.

"The soul," she writes, "while thus seeking after God, is conscious, with a joy excessive and sweet, that it is, as it were, utterly fainting away in a kind of trance: breathing, and all the bodily strength, fail it, so that it cannot even move the hands without great pain; the eyes close involuntarily, and if they are open, they are as if they saw nothing; nor is reading possible—the very letters seem strange, and cannot be distinguished—the letters, indeed, are visible, but, as the understanding furnishes no help, all reading is impracticable, though seriously attempted. The ear hears; but what is heard is not comprehended. The senses are of no use whatever, except to hinder the soul's fruition; and so they rather hurt it. It is useless to try to speak, because it is not possible to conceive a word; nor, if it were conceived, is there strength sufficient to utter it; for all bodily strength vanishes, and that of the soul increases, to enable it the better to have the

[1] M. Ribot recognizes it quite well. "Purely medical works," he says, "teach little respecting the psychology of this state (ecstasy); the reading of the mystics does so to a much greater extent" (*ibid.*)

fruition of its joy. Great and most perceptible, also, is the outward joy now felt. This prayer, however long it may last, does no harm—at least, it has never done any to me; nor do I remember, however ill I might have been when our Lord had mercy upon me in this way, that I ever felt the worse for it—on the contrary, I was always better afterwards."[1]

" During the rapture itself," adds the Saint, " the body is very often as if it were dead, perfectly powerless. It continues in the position it was in when the rapture came upon it—if sitting, sitting; if the hands were open, or if they were shut, they will remain open or shut."[2]

This very remarkable phenomenon of *muscular rigidity* is most excellently described in this passage and several others. It is clearly opposed to that general contracture that belongs to lethargy, which has none of this tractableness of body seen in ecstatics, whose limbs, though commonly rigid, nevertheless easily retain the position imparted to them or that in which the ecstasy has overtaken them.

A little further on she warns inexperienced directors against confusing this apparent death with true death: " If their directors have had no experience in the matter, they will think, perhaps, that they must be as dead persons during the trance—and they will think so the more if they have no learning."[3] Whence the discussion between certain theologians as to whether in ecstasy the soul really leaves the body, which St Thomas, with St Teresa, decides in the negative.

St Teresa, moreover, provided an experimental proof of this by noting with care that according to the testimony of her companions, in the greatest of her ecstasies, she never completely lost her pulse, although it could scarcely be felt. " Sometimes," she says, " my pulse ceases, as it were, to beat at all,—so the sisters say."[4] Furthermore, she never lost consciousness of herself. " For though the senses fail but rarely," she adds with perfect honesty, " it has happened to me occasionally to lose them wholly—seldom, however, and then only for a short time."[5]

In others of the Saint's writings we find again exactly the same descriptions of ecstasy; at most not more than one or two details are added there. Thus, we read in the *Interior Castle:* " When he intends ravishing the soul he takes away the power of speech, and although occasionally the other faculties are

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, ch. xx. [4] *Ibid.* [5] *Ibid.*

retained rather longer, no word can be uttered. Sometimes the person is at once deprived of all the senses, the hands and body becoming as cold as if the soul had fled; occasionally no breathing can be detected. This condition lasts but a short while; I mean in the same degree, for when this profound suspension diminishes the body seems to come to itself and gain strength to return again to this death which gives more vigorous life to the soul. This supreme state of ecstasy never lasts long."[1]

The suspension of the senses, then, ceases more or less completely between two very close ecstasies, and it is in this *second period* that the ecstatic may—with some effort—move, speak, write, or dictate. This is the moment of visions and revelations, as St Teresa is careful to note.[2] It is thus that we see produced in one series of ecstasies the curious alternation of the phenomena of life and death.

Let it, however, be noted that the phenomena of death are much more apparent than real. In looking at them more closely we very soon perceive that neither sight, hearing, nor the other senses, nor the power of movement are really impotent to fulfil their functions. Their inherent activity has not ceased: rather has it increased. But it is entirely wrapped up in the object of the vision, with which the soul is wholly enraptured. For instance, Bernadette, when in ecstasy, saw the apparition of the immaculate Virgin perfectly with her eyes, as well as all the outward objects connected with it, such as the stones of the grotto, the rose-tree, and so on. So also, although she appeared motionless, she came and went as directed by the Blessed Virgin. In the same way also St Teresa, when in ecstasy, seemed petrified; this, however, did not prevent her, on certain days, from going to the Holy Table and there performing all actions necessary for communion, because communion, on that day, was within the range of her ecstatic vision.

Sensitive and mobile activity, then, is not really abolished, nor even intrinsically paralysed, but only entirely concentrated on one single point, that of the vision, and that is why it seems wanting in all the rest.[3] It is therefore far less a paralysis

[1] *Int. Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.

[2] " It is to be observed," says St Teresa, " that if we see visions and hear words it never is at the time when the soul is in union in the very rapture itself " (*Life*, ch. xxv).

[3] This is also the opinion of St Teresa: " If it really be a union of all the faculties, [I say] that the soul, even if it wished—I mean, when it is in union—cannot make it known; and if it can, then it is

of the faculties, a passing death, than a special and exclusive direction that is impressed on them. Their activity, on the contrary, far from being diminished, gains in intensity that which it loses in extension.

Physicians who have been at all careful have not failed to observe this. Thus, Dr. Goix declares it in these words. "With regard," he says, "to the inactivity of the outward and inward senses, or the suspension of voluntary movements, these are phenomena more apparent than real. No faculty of St Teresa was truly paralysed during ecstasy. Absorbed by the presence of God, St Teresa no longer feels, no longer knows, no longer loves anything other than God. All outside occupation becomes impossible to her."[1]

This remark of the eminent doctor is of the highest importance. It shows us, in fact, that this inactivity, this apparent death among ecstatics is in no way due to the intrinsic perversion of the faculties by neurosis or any other pathological reason. This is why these two phenomena of insensibility and muscular rigidity, as they do not arise from any malady or organic trouble, cease instantly with the ecstasy; whereas when they are of morbid origin they continue after the nervous attack. Hence the continuance of anaesthesia and contraction after the crises of hysteria and catalepsy: and this is a most valuable test to distinguish them from ecstasy.

In the latter the powers are only absorbed, or, if preferred, suspended by an extrinsic *ligature*, the proof of which is to be found in the remarkable alternation which has just been recounted to us by St Teresa. All the faculties of ecstatics, as they remain healthy, are able to sleep or wake alternately. The ligature which binds them during ecstasy, then, is neither an organic malady nor the effect of an illness: *haec enim morbus non est.*

This does not mean that the supernatural gift of ecstasy can never be granted by God to one who is ill. It would probably not be contended that a nervous and ailing temperament must prevent a soul from receiving heavenly favours. It is not impossible, then, that the grace of divine ecstasy might accidentally be met with in conjunction with the physio-

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not union at all" (*Life*, ch. xviii). "The senses are all occupied in this fruition in such a way that not one of them is at liberty, so as to be able to attend to anything else, whether outward or inward" (*ibid.*).

[1] *Annales de phil. chrét.*, May and June, 1896.

logical phenomena of a real neurosis, as, for example, in the case of one that was hysterical.

But the effects of ecstasy would not be able to coexist with those of the hysterical crisis, because they are contradictory. There is contradiction, in fact, as we shall show later, between the state of hysterical suggestibility, in which the soul realizes all its emotions in the body, all the images of its dream, including the troubles of the vegetative life, and that state of total absorption in God which, on the contrary, prevents the soul from acting on the body, to such an extent that the sensible life and even the vegetative life seem to fade away. Then the body may lose its corporal manner of life, become lighter, be raised up in the air, no longer need nourishment—in a word, become immaterialized[1] and a kind of reflection of the soul.

It may be anticipated, then, that if one visited by divine ecstasy is of healthy temperament, the external phenomenon, as it has no cause other than the internal and supernatural fact, will exactly follow its phases and be the faithful echo of its progress, its zenith, and its decline.

This outward translation of the inward fact, however, in spite of its faithfulness, may assume all the varieties of temperament and habit which belong to the ecstatic, for it is a personal work. Moreover, perhaps no two ecstatics would be found to offer absolutely identical symptoms. Here are some examples, mostly borrowed from Görres. St Teresa was habitually motionless, standing or seated, with hands open or closed, in the position and attitude in which ecstasy had overtaken her. Her head was raised towards heaven, and her face radiant with joy.[2] St Frances of Rome held the hands crossed on the breast. St Catherine de Ricci hid her face with one hand.

Beatrice of Nazareth remained in choir, during ecstasy, bowed down in her stall, like someone so profoundly asleep that she might have been thought dead. Christine of Stommeln no longer gave any sign of life, and her body was rigid like that of a corpse or of a cataleptic, but marvellous wonders accompanied her ecstasy. St Thomas of Villanova remained standing with eyes raised to heaven, rigid as a marble statue. St Joseph of Cupertino with a cry fell on his knees, with his arms extended in the form of a cross. The hands and feet of St Catherine of Siena became contracted convulsively, her

[1] See Dr. Van der Elst, *Revue apologetique*, September 15, 1912.
[2] *Life*, ch. xviii.

fingers interlaced or else gripped with infrangible force on all she held in her hand. In her case, too, there was even seen a succession of contrary or dissimilar symptoms, such as icy cold and heat that bathed her in sweat, indicating in all probability the varied and dissimilar feelings experienced in successive ecstasies.

This variety of secondary detail is quite in keeping with the fundamental unity of the ecstatic phenomenon, which is a complete alienation, though more apparent than real, of sensibility and muscular movement.

Such is ecstasy in its essential manifestation, which must be carefully distinguished from a great number of marvellous phenomena which occasionally are added to it, and will here be separately treated, such, for instance, as *incombustibility*, which is an aggravation of the insensibility of the organs; their lightness or *levitation*, which raises them above the earth and holds them suspended in the air; *inedia*, or dispensing with nourishment; *bilocation*, *stigmata* or wounds of love, luminous *rays* and supernatural *odours* which complete the charm of their ecstatic *beauty*, and so on.

Let us hasten on to the *interior* and psychological phenomenon, which is the more important of the two elements of ecstasy, the first outward manifestation of which is a singularly expressive animation of face.

First of all, during outward insensibility, the ecstatic does not lose *consciousness* of what passes within. This is a most important characteristic, for it is a clear sign that the unconsciousness is only apparent, as we have explained. Moreover, it is found that after ecstasy nothing is forgotten. The ecstatic preserves the *remembrance* of it with sufficient clearness to be able to relate or put in writing, as did St Teresa, the minutest details of what is seen or experienced. "The senses," writes this Saint, "are not lost; at least, I was so much myself as to be able to see that I was being lifted up."[1]

This does not mean that the ecstatic is able, at the highest point of the ecstasy, to make a complete self-reflection or engage in psychological analyses of his consciousness. It is obvious that he must be entirely absorbed in God, without any self-reflection. "It seemed as if the doors of the senses were closed against its will," as St Teresa so well says, "in

[1] *Life*, ch. xx.

order that it might have more abundantly the fruition of our Lord."[1]

This reflection on self can only take place when the ecstasy begins to diminish. It is then that the soul seeks to understand in detail what has been seen, heard, or experienced, in order for it to be impressed even more deeply on the memory of the heart. But, without being reflective, the consciousness remains sufficiently active, even at the zenith of the ecstasy, to enable the very clear remembrance of it to persist, and thus offer positive matter to the effort at reflection and analysis which is to follow. This elaboration of remembrances is thus rendered possible and fruitful.

It is easy to understand that divine ecstasy, which consists essentially in an increase of activity of the higher faculties of understanding and will, cannot be without consciousness, just as consciousness cannot be without memory on awakening from ecstasy. Moreover, Benedict XIV established this teaching in his treatise on *The Canonization of Saints*,[2] by laying down the principle that the loss of remembrance after ecstasy, the inability to recall what was experienced, is a sign of false ecstasy. Let it be well noted, however, that it is possible to remember very clearly having seen or heard certain things without being able to recount them. This may happen in two different cases.

The first is due to the very sublimity of the object revealed, so raised above all earthly experience that no human language can express it. As Fr. Poulain has well said: "Ask a scholar, for instance, to express the depths of the infinitesimal calculus with the vocabulary of little children or of shepherds!" His embarrassment would soon become apparent, and his powerlessness to translate a conception which for all that is quite clear.

The second case is that in which difficulty would occur from the abundance and profusion of things seen all at once in the same vision: as if someone, going into a royal chamber filled with art treasures wonderfully arranged, saw them at one glance and was only able to retain a general view, . . . in such a case the soul cannot recall and can only repeat in a confused way that of which it has had a glimpse.[3]

St Teresa chose this comparison because she herself had experienced this impression on passing through the apartments

[1] *Life*, ch. xix.
[2] Bk. iii, ch. xlix, n. 6.
[3] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.

of the Duchess of Alba, where the plate-glass and mirrors, infinitely multiplying all objects reflected, revealed beauties and splendours to her which she was unable to describe after having admired them.

It is clear that this inability to describe what has been seen springs from a cause quite other than unconsciousness of the vision. It is therefore perfectly compatible with a state of full consciousness and remembrance, such as that of divine ecstasy. It is thanks to this full consciousness and complete remembrance of the ecstatic that St Teresa was able to describe to us with such clearness of psychological analysis all the other characteristic traits of her ecstasies.

The chief of these traits, it seems to us, is *passiveness*, a character that belongs to all mystical phenomena. As they are entirely free gifts of God, which we are not able to acquire by our own labour or by any human effort, " the soul," says St Teresa, " sees clearly that neither for obtaining nor for retaining this grace, great beyond all measure, has it ever done, or ever been able to do, anything of itself."[1]

Our Saint is so convinced of the truth of this fundamental principle that she unceasingly repeats it and explains it by a picturesque and striking image, namely, that it is more difficult for a man to enter into ecstasy of his own will than it is for a toad to fly.[2] So vigorous a metaphor dispels all doubt: an ecstasy that was more or less the fruit of our own will or the will of others would only be a false ecstasy, and here we have a decisive test, to the application of which we shall have to return at greater length. Not only can our personal effort not prepare the way for ecstasy, but this latter almost always happens suddenly when least expected—for instance, during a reading, some trivial work, or else a prayer. Thus St Teresa had her first ecstasy when forty-three years old, whilst she was reciting the *Veni Creator*.[3]

Forestalling all thought, all desire, all preparation on her part, the rapture occasionally seized the Saint with such sudden and violent impetuosity that she felt as though a divine eagle were seizing and uplifting her. It was useless to resist. " Occasionally," she writes, " I was able, by great efforts, to make a slight resistance; but afterwards I was worn out, like a person who had been contending with a strong giant."[4]

This sudden outburst of the Spirit of God may, no doubt,

[1] *Life*, ch. xix.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. xxii.
[3] *Ibid.*, ch. xxiv.
[4] *Ibid.*, ch. xx.

bring a moment of surprise and anxiety—sometimes outwardly betraying itself by a cry—but this soon makes way for ineffable peace and joy, and it is with a sense of sweetness that unconsciousness is produced. "During rapture," writes St Teresa, "the soul does not seem to animate the body, the natural heat of which is perceptibly lessened; the coldness increases, though accompanied with exceeding joy and sweetness."[1]

Thus complete *passiveness* and ineffable *sweetness* are the two characteristics of the beginnings of ecstasy. But this is only the beginning; let us then examine the psychological state of a soul during ecstasy itself.

That which essentially distinguishes it is a *fulness* or even an overflowing of *activity and life* in the higher faculties of understanding and will, in singular contrast with the sleep and apparent death of the senses and organs of the body. All life is concentrated on high, towards God. The gates of the senses are shut in order to be occupied with nothing other than God.

"This ecstasy," says St Teresa, "does not resemble a swoon or fit in which nothing either interior or exterior is felt. What I do understand is that the soul has never been more alive to spiritual things nor so full of light and knowledge of his majesty as it is now."[2]

In this colloquy of the soul with God, in fact, it enjoys an intellectual intuition, a prelude and foretaste of that of the blessed in heaven, and begins to be initiated into the divine secrets. But let us hear the words of our Saint. After stating that in the other degrees of mystical prayer "God still appears to be very far distant from the soul,"[3] she observes that in ecstasy, on the contrary, "the soul is represented as being close to God, and there abides a conviction thereof so certain and strong, that it cannot possibly help believing so."[4] She gives as proof of this the experimental intuition either of the presence of God in the soul, or of the Blessed Trinity, of which we have already given a detailed account, which, moreover, was an entire revelation to her.[5]

It is true that in this state of pure intuition of the intelligence, all reasoning, all labour of the mind is suspended, but only to give greater force and keenness to this higher work. "When our Lord suspends the understanding," writes the

[1] *Life*, ch. xx.
[2] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.
[3] *Life*, ch. xx.
[4] *Ibid.*, ch. xviii.
[5] *Ibid.*

Saint, " and makes it cease from its acts, he puts before it that which astonishes and occupies it; so that, without making any reflections, it shall comprehend in a moment (*en un credo*) more than we could comprehend in many years with all the efforts in the world."[1]

And she adds with authority: " I think that if the soul learns no mysteries at any time during raptures, they are no true raptures but some natural weakness that may occur to people of delicate constitutions, such as women, when by its strenuous efforts the spirit overpowers physical nature, and produces stupor, as I think I said in connection with the prayer of quiet. This is not so in genuine raptures, for then I believe God ravishes the soul wholly to himself, as being his very own and his bride, and shows her some small part of the kingdom she has thus won. However little this may be, all is great that is in this great God."[2]

To this fulness of intellectual life there is added, logically, a plenitude of affective life. Love follows knowledge, and even in a sense surpasses it.[3] Rapture of the heart and will, then, ought to follow that of the mind. After having completely closed the gate of the senses to the outward world, " it [the soul] is abiding alone with him; what has it to do but to love him ?"[4]

It is even the one thing needful, as St Teresa so often reminds her daughters: " It is not so essential to think much as to love much."[5] Unhappy is the barren thought which is not turned into love ! Now love is the complete sacrifice of self, as our Saint explains in the same passage; it is the yearning for heroic virtue. The ineffable sweetness of the love of God is but the holy oil which lubricates the movement of the sword of sacrifice.

We are now able to understand the meaning of this *change of soul* which St Teresa makes the touchstone of true ecstasy, and its essential test; " if the raptures be true raptures," she says, " the fruits and advantages spoken of abide in the soul; but if they did not, I should have great doubts about their being from God—yea, rather, I should be afraid they were those frenzies of which St Vincent [Ferrer] speaks."[6]

[1] *Life*, ch. xii.
[2] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.
[3] " The will loves more than the understanding knows " (St Teresa, *Relacion* viii, Engl. ed., p. 480; *Life*, ch. xviii; *Castle*, 6th M., ch. i).
[4] *Life*, ch. xix.
[5] *Castle*, 4th M., ch. i.
[6] *Life*, ch. xx.

And indeed, according to the world-wide maxim sanctified by the Gospel, the tree is known by its fruit. Now the activity of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, as in all Christian souls, finally reaches to the voluntary sacrifice of self. Henceforth the sign of the cross is the one and unfailing sign of all divine agency, and consequently of all true ecstasy. That is why, in causes for the canonization of saints, the Church, far from proving their sanctity by their ecstasies, always determines their ecstasies by their sanctity—that is to say, by the heroic degree of their virtue.

Although the *welfare of the soul*, or its rapid advance in the ways of sanctity, is the only direct and essential effect of divine ecstasy, the *welfare of the body* and health is not by any means excluded, and, on the contrary, appears to be an indirect and secondary effect. "Nor do I ever remember," declares St Teresa, "however ill I might have been when our Lord had mercy upon me in this way, that I ever felt the worse for it—on the contrary, I was always better afterwards."[1]

But if divine ecstasy does not always give an increase of physical strength, at least it never injures the health; and if it were to do so it would be a sign that the ecstasy was not really divine. This is, moreover, the opinion of St Teresa: "When God bestows such favours on the soul," she is careful to state, "although there may be languor both of mind and body, it is not shared by the soul, which feels great delight at seeing itself so near God; nor does this state ever continue for more than a very short time. Although the soul may become absorbed again, yet, as I said, unless already feeble, the body suffers neither exhaustion nor pain. I advise any of you who experience the latter to tell the Prioress, and to divert your thoughts as much as possible from such matters."[2]

A little further on she adds that divine ecstasy, far from fatiguing but rather being always beneficial, "strength of body is not indispensable when our Lord God chooses to withhold it."[3] Those that are sick and deprived by nature are thus not in the least disinherited from the supernatural gifts of the divine bounty.

Finally—and this is of the highest importance—when ecstasy, either inward or outward, is concerned, its recurrence is not subject to any law of *periodicity* and regularity, such as is observed in natural phenomena and a great number

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii.
[2] *Castle*, 4th M., ch. iii.
[3] *Ibid.*, 5th M., ch. i.

of illnesses. Periodicity itself, when it occurs among stigmatized ecstatics—of whom we shall treat later—on Friday or on certain feasts of the Passion of our Lord, has an eminently moral character, in no way comparable to the mathematical periodicity, for instance, of a quartan fever. Such is the last point that should be carefully noted when drawing the parallel looked for by our readers between the divine ecstasy described by St Teresa and the false ecstasies described by specialists in nervous maladies.

All these characteristic traits of internal or psychological ecstasy, in spite of their complexity, might be *summed up* in three words: before, during, and after rapture.

1. Before, complete *passiveness* of the will, which is able neither to provoke nor to suspend the gift of God. It abandons itself gently into the hands of God, who distributes his gifts as he pleases.

2. During, there is an intellectual *intuition* of an infinitely higher and transcendent order, accompanied by fully *conscious* sweet *emotions* of unspeakable wealth.

3. After, there is the *remembrance* of what has been seen and experienced in the ecstasy. There is also evidence of characteristic effects. In the *soul*, the understanding finds itself augmented by high and profound visions and the will deeply prompted to the most heroic virtues. In the *body*, health does not in any way suffer, and beneficent strength has often arisen enabling the ecstatic to perform the most difficult undertakings.

As regards the characteristic traits of external or physiological ecstasy, let us, in conclusion, remember that they are summed up in two principal ones which we must never lose sight of in all our discussion: total alienation, more apparent than real, both of the senses and of the motive power, or muscular rigidity. Moreover, these two accidental phases, being in no way morbid or organic, disappear immediately after the ecstasy.

§ 3

Ecstasy and madness

In spite of our deep repugnance to the coupling of these two words—which seems to us almost blasphemy—it is very necessary to follow our opponents on the ground they have selected and encounter them with their own weapons. Now all the nervous maladies which they have ventured to approximate

to the phenomenon of ecstasy—catalepsy, hysteria, somnambulism, which we shall shortly examine in turn—have this characteristic in common, that they are species of delirium, of unbalanced mind, of passing or intermittent madness. There is in this, then, a general objection against the divine character of ecstasy, which it will be well to eliminate before refuting particular objections. Once the general principle of our opponents—be they physicians or philosophers—gives way, all the inferences which they draw from it will be destroyed more easily.

Open all the works of *alienist physicians*, more or less imbued with materialism or at least with rationalism, and what is most striking is their almost complete agreement in the desire to explain the supernatural ecstatic by a neurosis more or less bordering on madness and by madness itself. One might think that this was their only way of escaping from the supernatural which they deny or abhor. " Ecstasy," says Dr. A. Lemoine, " is a kind of madness."[1] " Ecstasy," writes Alfred Maury, " whatever be its cause, ought to be regarded as a morbid state, less pronounced, no doubt, than mental alienation, but able to assume all the characteristics of that disease."[2] Such has been the watchword of official science for the last fifty years. The *a priori* conclusion is so manifest that even though our saints had never been ill they would be taken to be so. Thus, remarks Dr. Van der Elst, when they breathe after death it is immediately surmised that they " suffer " in their body and that they feel some " physical discomfort."[3]

Side by side with this antichristian prejudice, we also note a general tendency in certain physicians to confuse all higher activity of the intelligence, genius itself, and so much the more ecstasy, with neurosis. It is the " morbid theory of genius " which Moreau of Tours was the first to raise into a system.

Dr. Grasset has very truly answered that intellectual superiority is not a malady. Only that which prevents normal functioning is unhealthy. Now, far from restraining the intellectual functions, genius exalts them; it is therefore not morbid.

Is neurosis at least a *consequence* of this superiority? Sometimes, perhaps. It would then be the outcome of genius, not its source. " Thus many people have the neurosis of

[1] Albert Lemoine, *Du sommeil.*
[2] Alfred Maury, *Le sommeil et les rêves.*
[3] Murisier, *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*, p. 23.

Pascal without his genius, just as one can have the nose of Cyrano without his gifts."[1] In the same way, if some of our mystical saints had suffered from a neurosis, the neurosis would not on that account have been sanctity. Many people have had their neurosis without either their sanctity or their mystical gifts!

Recently, again, madness as a solution of ecstasy has been taken up by certain experts in psychiatry, eminent in other respects, but more acquainted with the psychology of mental hospital patients than with that of our saints, of whom they are practically ignorant or whom they only know in caricature.

Dr. A. Marie, in his work *Mysticisme et folie* (1906),[2] has even extended this explanation by madness not only to ecstasy properly so-called, but to all Christian mysticism, and by this very extension has increased the weakness of his theory. If mental soundness consists—as all common sense proclaims—in the judicious employment of means to arrive at ends and in sustained steadfastness of conduct, St Teresa and all our great mystics have given such striking proofs of it that history must either be ignored or falsified to doubt it. Their whole life is coherent, harmonious, productive; whilst that of the delirious is incoherent, disordered, lacking in all logical order and all reasonable object. Moreover, Dr. Marie finds himself forced to make a separate category for our saints. Whilst the religious delirium of the truly insane might be called "depressive in form" and incoherent, the saints would tend to "systematization" or be coherent in form. It would thus be necessary to distinguish between incoherent madness and coherent and reasonable madness! The writer indeed has spoken more truly than he thought, for his classification is that of St Paul, speaking of the "folly of the cross": *Judaeis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam*, and he adds: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men."[3]

[1] Grasset, *Le psychisme inférieur*, ch. iii, p. 294; *Introd. physiol. à l'étude de la philosophie*, p. 116.

[2] There is a preface to this volume by Dr. Thulié, himself the author of another work in the same spirit: *La mystique divine, diabolique et naturelle des théologiens*, a criticism of which by Dr. Van der Elst may be seen, *Revue de philosophie*, November 1, 1912, p. 610, in which he remarks that "Professors Dumas of Paris and Delcroix of Caen, in their doctrinal teaching, the psychologist William James, in his later works, the critic James Leuba, in Ribot's *Revue philosophique*, refuse to identify the mystics with the sick."

[3] 1 *Cor.* i 23, 25.

The same writer pushes his ignorance of the metaphorical language of mystics so far as to suggest that their love of God is a purely sexual emotion! As though there were some other language than that of human love in which they could speak of divine love! Moreover, he refutes himself by stating that the sexual emotions of the delirious are always painful, and that divine love is independent of them, since there have been mystical saints of every age, and those both virgins and married. This insult to our saints is so coarse and gratuitous that it has raised a protest even from free-thinkers, such as Dr. Murisier.[1]

To this assault made by scholars on the divine character of true ecstasy may be added that of the *philosophers* who re-echo them. Indeed, the authority of the first, if alone, would not greatly impress us. The tendency among alienist doctors to see patients and people that are more or less ill in all those around them, especially if these incur their displeasure, is well known. Moreover, between a man of sound mind and one that is not completely so, there are so many degrees and intermediate shades that it is often difficult to state precisely the lines which divide them; so with a little good will an alienist might discover some madness everywhere. The diagnosis of medical specialists therefore calls for caution much more than does that of philosophers, who have not the same mental prejudices.

Now the latter, in their turn, have just told us that ecstasy was a "degeneration" of our highest faculties, the intelligence and the will; a "suicide of the soul," and have boldly concluded from this the "immorality of ecstasy."

Most assuredly such an accusation was entirely unlooked for by those of our readers who have followed the lofty descriptions of ecstasy by St Teresa and our other great mystics. It is so unlikely that it must have arisen from some incredible confusion, or, perhaps, from that blind and fierce hatred which is vowed by the atheist to the Christian profession and all idea of religion. Dr. Lelut appears to admit this when he calmly writes: "Under pain of being taken for a deluded madman one must no longer claim to be in communication with the divinity or with supernatural agents, whoever they may be."[2]

This is a cry of hate which we shall not honour with an answer. If it were a serious objection, propounded by a man

[1] Murisier, *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*, p. 30.
[2] Lelut, *Le démon de Socrate.*

not alienated by passion, possessed of common sense, it would be enough for us to reply: Begin by proving that God does not exist, or, if he does exist, that he has neither the power nor the goodness to communicate himself thus to certain privileged souls. When this proof is forthcoming we will acknowledge your logic; until then we refuse to hear you. You affirm as proven that which must be proved, which is pure sophistry.

Let us pass on to the rather more plausible *objections* of certain *philosophers*. According to Cousin, Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, Jouffroy, and the whole rationalist school, Christian mysticism is "an unnatural deviation of the religious mind"—thus have these gentlemen made themselves a dictionary of calumny—and ecstasy, according to them the supreme end and fatal goal of mysticism, is a veritable "suicide of the soul." Indeed, say they, ecstasy suppresses reason and liberty in man, to leave only sentiment, and thus ends in the "narrowing of the field of consciousness," in the "disaggregation" of the mental forces, and in the "annihilation" of liberty and human personality.[1]

Let us examine the monumental ambiguities which lie hidden beneath these magnificent new words.

First of all, ecstasy must be a state that is *contrary to nature*. In fact, M. Cousin tells us that mysticism seeks to know God—as is its duty—but it discards the natural means that God has given man for this object: "The mediation of the world and of truth . . . The mystic claims to know God without mediation."

Undoubtedly, to despise arguments drawn from the contemplation of the wonders of the world in order to raise ourselves to God would be a method to be condemned. But St Paul, our first ecstatic, far from omitting them, has directly recommended them to us when he teaches us that the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: *Invisibilia enim ipsius per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur*,[2] and there

[1] "Mysticism, as it is presented in history, lacks the fundamental condition of progress, which is the enlarging and unifying of spiritual life; it loses itself in ecstasy, in the annihilation of the human personality" (*Revue de métaph.*, March, 1911, p. 5 of supplement). One is amazed at seeing history falsified to this extent!

[2] *Rom.* i 20.

is not one great mystical theologian, from St Paul to St Thomas and St Teresa, who has not time and again repeated this teaching, which has been consecrated by the Councils both of Trent and the Vatican.

But does it follow that because there is a wholly natural and popular means of attaining to the knowledge of God, there may not be any that is supernatural, reserved for elect souls? Far from suppressing nature, divine grace perfects it and completes it. Now a complement of nature, which raises it and crowns it without destroying it, cannot be said to be contrary to nature or forbidden by any moral law.

Cousin adds: "To know of God only the manifestations or the signs of his existence is not to know him sufficiently; the mystic aspires to be united to him—or rather to *lose himself in him.*" Doubtless to desire to "lose oneself in God" may be understood in a pantheistic and erroneous sense; moreover, it is nowhere to be found in any of our great mystical theologians: by union with God is intended not the identification of two substances, but a moral union of thought, love, and will. There is nothing in this that does not conform to the purest and most elementary principles of moral theology. And there is nothing more opposed to the annihilation of Buddhism in its pantheistic *nirvana.* Here again we have a rationalistic tilting at windmills; nor is it the only one.

They claim that ecstasy must be a *narrowing* of the field of consciousness, or, put more elegantly, a narrow and depressing "monoïdeism" more or less comparable to the monomanias with fixed ideas tended in our clinical hospitals. "Is it not evident?" say these worldlings. "Is not the soul of the saint successively closed to all that interests us and moves us? Does not the number of things of which it no longer even thinks go on increasing day by day? Are not many of these saints to be compared to the inhabitants of a house, the doors and windows of which are closed one by one, in order to force them to look and breathe only towards the sky?" "Before this argument can be of any psychological value," replies M. Joly, "we must first prove that, in the mind of the mystic, the ideas which he discards are not replaced by any other ideas, that the interior life is more empty, and ideas suggested by the thought of the next world are more barren of results, than are the lives of the worldly and the ideas which this world suggests. Next, that desires for the glory of God and the conversion of sinners, the direction of souls, the founda-

tion of an order, the care of a church, and still more the reform of the Church Universal, do not call for anything like the sustained energy that is needed by men who seek only for fame and amusement."[1]

This masterly reply shows the emptiness of this second objection. Here is a third: ecstasy runs the risk of producing *disaggregation* and loss of balance of the mental powers, and, therefore, is at least the beginning of a " suicide of the soul."

As mental " disaggregation " belongs to the domain of hysteria, we shall return to it shortly at greater length. It is enough here to state that this decline and scattering of our highest faculties, the intelligence and the will, could be brought about either by their being weakened and destroyed or by the consciousness which should unite them being slackened and disappearing. Now none of these dangers is to be feared.

The consciousness of the ecstatic, as we have seen at length, is never lost, according to the testimony of St Teresa, who experienced it many times and proved it by the wonderful psychological descriptions, both clear and exact, which she has left us, of all she saw or felt in this lofty state.

With regard to the understanding, far from this being destroyed or lying dormant in this ineffable contact with the Truth itself, it is raised and enlightened, and reaches its maximum activity. The will in turn, following the uplifting of the understanding in its flight, aspires to heroic virtue and finds its joy in the delights of divine love.

Very far from tending to " disaggregation " and impotence, all the mental powers thus tend to a most powerful and high " aggregation " beneath the divine action, which strengthens them by raising and directing them towards one only end, the greater glory of God, through the greater well-being of souls. Thence the potent unity of life and wonderful fruitfulness of apostolate among our Christian heroes.

Finally—a last objection—is *human liberty*, that inalienable gift of God, so extolled by our modern rationalists, renounced in ecstasy ? And would such voluntary alienation be an act of revolting " immorality "?

This is an astonishing and surprising objection on the part of moralists who, every day, approve, or at least tolerate, scenes of magnetism in which the hypnotized subject transfers his liberty into the hands of magnetizers, whose morality is not always self-evident, and yet refuse to allow us to transfer our

[1] H. Joly, *Psychology of the Saints*, English ed., p. 114

own liberty into the hands of God! On the part, also, of physicians who have raised hypnotic suggestion to a therapeutic art, yet refuse us the right of abandoning ourselves to God for motives of moral therapeutics and of sanctity!

But this answer, however valuable it may be, is only indirect, and, moreover, we must deny that the instances are parallel. When we abandon ourselves to God we lose neither consciousness nor liberty; whereas those who give themselves over to a hypnotizer often lose both one and the other. It is open to question, and is still disputed, whether a hypnotized subject be wholly irresponsible. We believe him to be more or less so according to the case, and that if the moral sense of his actions is not always done away with, it is more or less weakened. It cannot then be disputed that here there is a blow aimed by man at human liberty, and a breach of the moral law.

On the contrary, the ecstatic, as we have seen, never loses consciousness, and his will, so much the more free as it is enlightened by the sovereign truth, freely acquiesces in all that is seen in the divine light, in all the holy desires which this light inspires, in all the holy transports which it kindles. Like the blessed in heaven, face to face with the vision of God, he unites himself with their eternal *Amen!* They are at the same time sinless and free with the most perfect liberty, that which is most enlightened, which excludes absolutely all danger of error and sin: the liberty of the children of God!

The ecstatic, then, renounces none of the natural gifts of God in his soul: neither his understanding nor his liberty, either by narrowing the field of consciousness or by disaggregation of his mental faculties or by the annihilation of his personality. Far from that, human nature is infinitely raised up and ennobled in him by the supernatural gift of divine grace. Of this our great mystics are the witnesses: St Paul, St Gregory the Great, St Augustine, St Thomas and St Bonaventure, St Ignatius and St Francis Xavier, St Dominic and St Francis of Assisi, St Francis de Sales, the saintly Curé d'Ars, and so on. Who dares to look on these minds as disaggregated, closed to great thoughts, without consciousness or personality, or as the waste products of humanity, when they were its light and its guides? Moreover, all the Fathers of the Church and theologians are unanimous in describing these mystical states as a *divinization* of the soul, not in essence, doubtless, but in resemblance. It is no longer permissible, then, to speak seriously of the *suicide* of the soul: this is only one of those

grotesque expressions of humiliating ignorance from which men who profess to be the masters of modern thought are not always exempt.

§ 4

Ecstasy and catalepsy

It is easy for physicians to say that ecstasy is a nervous malady more or less akin to madness: their difficulty is to leave these vague statements and specify the particular malady or neurosis to which it belongs. It is here that writers are perplexed, each one of them expressing a different opinion; this alone is sufficient to show the weakness of a theory lacking in precision. " If there were one quite typical malady, a well-recognized counterfeit of ecstasy," as Dr. Van der Elst well says,[1] " much would be made of it. The difficulty of such a choice suggests hesitation to begin with."

Let us, however, follow them in their principal surmises. The first attempts to liken ecstasy to a cataleptic crisis. Let us then examine more closely the nature of this malady.

Description. — Catalepsy, according to the most reliable physicians,[2] is a particular and periodic state in which the muscles of the life of relation—those of the vegetative life are not affected—are incapable of acting and reacting. They cease to obey the will, and retain, like soft wax, the various attitudes given them. It is less a malady of itself than a symptom common to divers maladies, in which the activity of the will is affected, such as hysteria, mania, hypochondria, melancholia with stupor, and so on. Sometimes it starts with cephalaea, with gaping; at others abruptly, without any forewarning ailment, and the sick man remains in the position in which he has been overtaken, however fatiguing or abnormal it may be, for a longer or shorter period, until the end of the crisis, which also comes spontaneously. The fatigue of these different positions is never felt by the patient, and this points to a more or less complete anaesthesia, together with a paralysis of the cerebral centres, which, under the influence of the memory and the association of ideas, are accustomed to set the voluntary muscles in motion.

This description of modern medical science is not altogether new. It is to be found, in substance, in ancient writers, who were well acquainted with this functional disorder of the motor

[1] *Revue pr. d'apolog.*, September 15, 1912, p. 903.
[2] Bourdin, *Traité de la catalepsie.*

nerves. It is also to be found in our great mystics, especially St Teresa[1] and Benedict XIV.[2]

A concrete *example* will enable us more easily to understand and vividly grasp this strange phenomenon. It is borrowed from Dr. Fabre, who describes in this way the crises of one of his patients, Elizabeth D—, aged twenty-five years: "Every day the attack began at one o'clock and ended at five. When in it her eyes were fixed and motionless; she made no other movements than those she was made to perform; all parts of her body were insensible; she was pinched, pins and needles were inserted in her arms and legs without her giving any sign of pain; there was only the pulse to show that she was not dead. If one or several of her fingers were bent they remained as they were placed; if they were held out it was the same. . . . When raised to a sitting posture she remained in it. If lifted up she remained standing; if one foot were raised she stood straight up on the other; when inclined to one side or the other she remained in the position wherein she was put. It is true that when she was placed in very unnatural positions she did not remain in them as long as in those that were more natural; convulsive movements then seized her which caused her to fall back."[3]

In presence of such a scene, superficial minds did not hesitate to compare it with the more or less analogous phenomena of ecstatics. "The ecstatic is afflicted with catalepsy!" exclaims Dr. Maury.[4] And other doctors have eagerly repeated: "Ecstasy is but one of the phases of catalepsy." We have even seen eminent Catholics bow down, without discussion, before these oracles of medical science and repeat in turn: "Ecstasy evidently constitutes a marked disorder of the nervous system. Many alienists also recognize in it one of the phases of catalepsy. . . ." At least, adds the same writer, "it is rare for the ecstatic not to reach this (cataleptic) state."[5] Such a statement, we reply, is not only superficial and incomplete, but also seriously inaccurate.

[1] *Life*, ch. v.

[2] *Ex morbo quem medici "catalepsim" vocant correpti, omni sensu et motu destituuntur, ac in eo situ quo deprehensi fuerunt, rigidi et immobiles manent, apertis et immotis oculis, vigilantis figuram retinentes, licet omnis sensuum functio sopita sit* (Bened. XIV, *De beatific. sanct.*, III, ch. xlix, n. 3).

[3] Fabre, *Biblioth. de médécine pratique.*

[4] A. Maury, *Du sommeil*, p. 231.

[5] H. Joly, *L'Imagination*, pp. 64, 68.

Its criticism.—First of all, it is superficial and incomplete, since it only takes into account the former of the two essential elements of true or divine ecstasy, the outward and physiological element of insensibility, setting aside the inward and psychological one of intensity of spiritual life, dealing, therefore, only with what is accessory and discarding that which is the more important. It only touches on the material side, whereas the psychical side is the one which, for us, has the greater interest.

What becomes then of the nobler faculties of the soul during the cataleptic crisis: those of consciousness, imagination, understanding, will, and love? Their numbness is complete, so far so that Professor Bourdin, in his treatise on catalepsy already referred to, was able to write: "It is *mental nothingness*, not relative but absolute." And all physicians are of the same opinion. It is, moreover, easy to demonstrate this by studying the patient before, during, and after the crisis.

(*a*) Before the crisis, whenever it is possible to observe the initial stages, a progressive numbness of the mental faculties is observed, the forerunner of what will become total later on.

(*b*) During the crisis, no outward sign nor gesture, nor facial expression, betrays the least idea or the least inward emotion. Hence it is a nothingness. On the other hand, all the physiological signs indicate numbness of cerebral activity; now without the brain the action of the intelligence is necessarily suspended.

(*c*) After the crisis, the cataleptic patient has forgotten everything that may have passed in his soul: which is a certain sign of suspension of intellectual and conscious life. Finally—a most significant detail—after the crisis the patient seems to take up again the thread of his ideas or his interrupted conversation at the exact point at which they had ceased. There has been, then, a real intellectual break, a complete suspension of ideas between the moments of the beginning and end of the crisis.

The mental life here resembles the movement of a clock, stopped by a crash at some particular hour, its hands beginning to move again at the exact point where they were stopped; or else a gramophone that continues some musical phrase or air that was interrupted for a moment. Between the two moments the break is absolute. It is useless to insist further: the contrast between ecstasy and a cataleptic crisis is thus clearly shown.

It may also be remarked that the two phenomena are un-

folded in inverse order: for whereas ecstasy is an increase of mental activity which brings about lack of sensibility, catalepsy is an unconsciousness of the senses which brings about another unconsciousness, that of intellectual life. Ecstasy is a zenith of the higher life, catalepsy is the annihilation of both intellectual and sensible life; ecstasy is the raising of the soul to the life of pure spirits, catalepsy is the lowering to the purely material or vegetative life. No opposition could be more complete: it is as day to night.

But in order to understand it, ecstasy must be considered in the synthesis of these two elements, the psychological and physiological, instead of stopping at the latter, which is secondary. Our opponents are guilty of sophistry in hastening to conclude from a partial and accidental likeness a total and essential resemblance. In such a way an animate body might be compared to one that is inanimate on the plea that they are both bodies; or a man to a bird in a poultry-yard on the ground that they are both bipeds. It is taking the part for the whole.

Let us go still further. Even from this incomplete point of view, purely material and physiological, we maintain that between the unconsciousness of cataleptics and the insensibility of ecstatics there are but superficial resemblances, associated with fundamental differences which a more attentive study will easily discover.

The following three *differences* are those which are most striking: they are probably not the only ones.

(*a*) The cataleptic crisis has periodical and fixed returns similar to those of a quartan fever or other chronic maladies. Thus is indicated a morbid and natural cause, not in any way miraculous, the action of which is never periodic and inevitable, for the Spirit of God is free and blows where it wills.

(*b*) Plastic tractableness of the members in cataleptic cases is absolute, whilst it never exists completely with ecstatics. This is easy to understand: when there is opposition between the intellectual life or the feelings of the ecstatic and the odd or indecorous attitudes imposed on the ecstatic's members by others, there is a spontaneous resistance, due to lack of harmony between the thought and the action. With the cataleptic, on the contrary, there is never opposition between any gestures and his ideas or intimate feelings, because these do not exist. Hence there is never any resistance.

(*c*) Finally, the facial expression of the cataleptic is invari-

able; it is that in which he was overtaken by the crisis, whereas that of the ecstatic changes with the variety of scenes that are unfolded in the ecstasy, which he appears to translate outwardly by varied gestures or attitudes. It is a mobile expression of the interior life, whilst the grimace of the cataleptic is that of a corpse or a petrified mummy.

The outward and accidental phenomenon of ecstasy is, then, essentially different from that of the cataleptic, and this claim that there is any close resemblance between ecstasy and catalepsy gives way on serious examination.

Moreover, the greater number of scholars, we believe, have now gone back on these superficial and precipitate opinions, which rationalist and antichristian prejudice explains only too easily. All now distinguish ecstasy from catalepsy, at least by the exercise of the higher faculties in ecstasy and their total suspension in catalepsy. But though they no longer confuse ecstasy with catalepsy, they seek to assimilate it to another form of neurosis, for they are not disarmed, but have only changed their weapon. So we must now face a new attack and discuss new objections.

§ 5

Ecstasy and hysteria

Contemporary physicians are unanimous in discarding the gross notions of hysteria for which the Greek etymology of this word, ὑστέρα, was responsible. It is not an illness of women nor of the feminine organs, but is common to both sexes, although ten times more frequent with the woman than the man. Although it is infinitely rarer among virgins than those that are married or the incontinent,[1] it is not, however, more

[1] " Continence," says Dr. G. Bermutz, " which all physicians of antiquity, and many modern ones, looked upon as the necessary generative cause, so to speak, of hysteria, can no longer to-day be regarded as an indispensable condition for the development of this neurosis; more than this, it cannot be looked on as a *factor* in this malady. . . . The number of virgin sufferers from hysteria is *infinitely restricted* as compared with the married, either legitimately or illicitly . . . even more, among a great number of the latter the manifestation of neurosis occurred after the cessation of virginity, and the malady, if it persisted after this, was more often aggravated than cured as was thought to be the case according to the galeno-hippocratic theory."

humiliating nor more dishonourable or wanton than the other maladies of the nervous system.

Its positive notion, which has long been vague and uncertain on account of the Proteus-like appearances assumed by this evil, is beginning, nevertheless, to come to light, and the following are the principal ideas which appear to dominate all medical controversies.

That which is most striking, first of all, in the descriptions of alienist physicians such as Charcot, Bernheim, and their disciples of the Salpêtrière or Nancy, is the unanimous and insistent way in which they employ the epithet *unbalanced* to their hysterical women. They are, indeed, doubly so: unbalanced as regards the sensibility and the nervous reactions of sundry parts of the body, where are found certain points or *hysterogenic zones*, some insensible whilst others are hyperaesthetic—a phenomenon known even before the Middle Ages, when the popular belief thus distinguished sorcerers—and unbalanced in the mental faculties, seemingly a consequence of the former. This expression *unbalanced* remains so far the dominant note that perhaps it would suffice to distinguish hysteria thereby from all other forms of neurosis.

"Hysteria," Dr. Goix has said, "is a neurosis which attacks the patient from both the physical and the moral side; it is accompanied by a particular psychical state which all writers point out and describe in great detail, and this state is so constant that it enters into the definition of hysteria . . . it is lack of balance or mental 'degeneracy.'"[1]

Here, apparently, the divergence between physicians begins.

Some, with Dejérine, see in this mental disorder a perversion of *emotivity*.

Others, with Pierre Janet, find therein, above all, a *mental* trouble that affects the power of forming and utilizing groups of ideas and images—that is, as regards mental functions in course of evolution, but not at all as regards functions already acquired, that are old and incapable of being altered.

Others, finally, with Babinski, without denying the two preceding points of view, occupy a third, which according to their theory is primary: that of pathological *suggestibility* in the patients, which makes them wonderfully docile with regard to all orders given them by their hypnotizers. But is not this suggestibility itself precisely the effect of their complete lack

[1] Dr. Goix, *Annales de phil. chrét.*, June, 1896.

of mental balance, either as regards their ideas or their emotivity ?

In this case the three points of view, far from being opposed, quite well complete and mutually shed light on one another, and a definition of hysteria might perhaps result from their synthesis. Meanwhile, whilst waiting for these scholars to settle their differences on these points, we may note among them two courses, according to whether they consider suggestion as cause or effect of hysteria. Whatever is to be said as to this purely theoretical controversy, let us pass on to the description of the phenomena, both *physiological* and *psychological*, of the hysterical crisis, in order to compare them with those of ecstasy and to show the difference between them.

The *physiological phenomena*, that are outward, are very different according to whether they are observed in *greater* or *lesser* hysteria.

In greater hysteria, they develop in four phases which, since Charcot's experiments, have become classical: (1) The first is epileptoid and convulsive, identical with the *aura* of epilepsy, characterized by a sensation of *swelling* [boule][1] rising in the throat, buzzing in the ears, blows in the head, and so on; it ends by a shorter kind of epileptic attack; (2) the second, known as the clownish phase, is that of great contortions over the whole body, generally like the *arc of a circle*, forwards or backwards; (3) the third phase is that of passional attitudes—fear, lewdness, anger, jealousy, ecstasy, and so forth—sometimes with silent, but more often with talkative mimicry, connected with the obsessing idea; (4) the last closes the series with scenes of delirium, with or without hallucination, and by mad accesses of laughing or weeping. The subject is awakened by blowing strongly into his eyes. After and as a result of the attack are observed considerable weariness and more or less serious indispositions, among which physicians notify paraplegia, aphonia, oliguria, and even anuria.

Such is the complete cycle of greater hysteria obtained artificially by Charcot by an intense influence over certain special subjects. As will be seen, ecstasy is only an accidental detail of it, which is not found in all hysterical crises.

Ordinary or *lesser* hysteria only reproduces the greater in

[1] The hysterical " boule " is a swelling of the throat with a sensation of suffocation, arising from spasmodic contractions of the œsophagus.

an abridged form, reduced, masked, but sufficiently characteristic to indicate their essential identity. Moreover, it is always spontaneous, at least at first, though afterwards it may be provoked artificially.

It is not necessary here to describe each of these scenes in detail. It is enough to state that the hysterical crisis in several of its essential parts is so repugnant and abominable that after having seen it once I firmly resolved never to see it again. I know of nothing more afflicting and horrible than these scenes of frightful convulsions, vomiting of blood, hiccoughs, spasms of the pharynx and œsophagus, delirious words, incoherent cries, unnameable roaring and barking of a wretched woman that rolls and writhes on the ground.

It must not astonish us that after such contortions of every member the general health is affected for a long time. The head remains on fire, the eyes sore, the teeth on edge, every sense afflicted with intense nervousness. Much more, between two attacks, physicians have often noticed various ailments—paralysis, trembling, vaso-motor troubles, and so on. With regard to the phase of religious ecstasy—if it is produced—it is only a theatrical grimace, a caricature of the religious sentiment, which can only inspire pity instead of being truly noble and moving.

In the presence of this lamentable picture, compare divine ecstasy, and in all good faith see if it has anything in common with it. Doubtless every kind of sleep and every sort of unconsciousness have some resemblance as regards *matter*, yet how different are they in *form!* Now it is by their form that objects are specified.

Occasionally the sight of an ecstatic—such, for instance, as Bernadette—is full of angelic sweetness and gentleness. In any case, there are never those convulsions and violent shocks, inordinate and contrary to nature, which, moreover, would be in direct opposition to the peace and rapture of a holy soul so closely united with God. Ecstasy is like a lovely day of springtide, flooded with light and heavenly joy; the hysterical crisis is a night of terror and frightful nightmare. The divine phenomenon is peaceful and coherent, even in transport; beneficent and fruitful like all that is well ordered; the hysterical phenomenon is a pathological disturbance, incoherent, more or less indecent, injurious, fatiguing, and barren. The contrast is as great as can be.

We have just referred to the rapturous ecstasies of Berna-

dette witnessed to by so many contemporaries. Let us add another instance, cited by Görres, who was its impressed spectator. "The first time I went to see her," he writes—he is speaking of Maria Moerl—"I found her in the position she occupies during the greater part of the day, on her knees at the end of her bed, in ecstasy. Her hands, crossed on the breast, showed the stigmata; her face was turned towards the church and slightly raised; her eyes, uplifted towards the sky, had an expression of deep mental absorption which nothing outward was able to disturb. No movement was to be observed in her excepting that of breathing or swallowing. At times something like a slight vibration was noticed: it was a sight only comparable to that offered by the angels, were we to see them prostrate in prayer at the foot of the throne of God. Even the hardest hearts are unable to resist this sight. Astonishment, joy, and piety have caused many tears to flow around her."[1]

But here some incredulous physician, little influenced by this touching spectacle, of which he understands nothing, may reproach us with yielding to æsthetics, whereas this is a matter of physiology. Let us, then, come back to physiological ground and show him the essential difference between ecstatic sleep and that of the hysterical crisis.

Two essential physical symptoms differentiate them: (*a*) complete alienation of the senses with the ecstatic, but very incomplete with the hysterical patient; (*b*) perfect muscular rigidity with the first, but very imperfect with the second. Thence a general characteristic which combines these two differences—absolute *immobility* in ecstasy; that of a marble statue or of apparent death. To hysteria, on the contrary, there belongs an excessive and mad *mobility*, evinced in each of the four classic phases of the attack.

In the first, which has been called epileptoid, the patient exhibits all the hideous convulsions of epilepsy. In the second, that of clownishness, are the great movements and contortions that have given it the name. In the third, that of passional attitudes, and in the last, that of delirium, there are, again, always inordinate movements. Hysterical subjects are merely persons that are agitated, mad folk who often have to be bound or kept in a strait-jacket. Ecstatics, on the contrary, are immovable in a sweet rapture. And when, in exceptional circumstances, they abandon their apparent immobility in order to represent the scenes of the Passion, a somewhat rare

[1] Görres, *La mystique*, vol. ii, p. 257.

species of ecstasy, or else—a still rarer phenomenon—in order to lift themselves into the air, balancing themselves there like the lightest of feathers beneath the slightest puff, all these movements are sedate, restrained, perfectly decent, and have nothing of the mad agitation of hysterical patients.

Never have our ecstatics performed the hideous contortions or backward semicircular bendings that are to be seen at the Salpêtrière; never have they been seen to utter the cries of wild beasts, to tear their clothing or flesh, to strike their heads and limbs against the walls or on the ground; never have they been shut up to prevent them from threatening or biting, as is done daily with hysterical patients.

Hysteria is a mad and often violent agitation, the worst of the neuroses. To wish to liken to it ecstasy, which is the ideal type of contemplative and sweet immobility, is more than scornful, it is a mere guess, the utmost limit of error !

This outward and visible contrast between ecstasy and hysteria already gives us a glimpse of the inward and invisible contrast of which it is the sensible expression, but this we must study still more closely.

The essential *psychological phenomenon* of hysteria, as we have already stated, by the avowal of all alienists, is summed up in the words *loss of balance*, or " disaggregation " of the mental faculties. It is a lessening, not an increase, of the activity of the mind and the power of the will.

" Their principal characteristic," writes P. Janet, " is here, as always, a diminution of the psychological phenomena (notably consciousness, which becomes distorted or suspended; the attention, which becomes impotent; the understanding, which becomes impoverished; the memory, which disaggregates until the personality is doubled). Such patients are usually very uninterested, at least regarding everything unconnected with a few fixed ideas. . . . Their emotions are exaggerated, out of proportion, but monotonous and small in number. . . . In short, hysteria is a form of mental disaggregation, characterized by a tendency to complete and permanent doubling of the personality."[1]

This picture, from a master-hand, the truth of which no physician has disputed, is so much the more impressive in that it gives us the explanation and the key to the phenomena

[1] P. Janet, *L'automatisme psychologique ;* cf. *État mental des hystériques.*

described. It is a *fixed idea* which is its invisible motive force, and by the word *idea* must also be understood every image, every intense feeling, that is developed without counterbalance, so as to invade everything, thus paralysing and annihilating all the living powers of the soul—consciousness, attention, memory, understanding, affections, will. . . . All mental activity is thus little by little suspended and becomes nullified before a besetting idea which itself is suffocated and lost in its own excess. This, indeed, is what has been truly described as a " suicide of the soul," and it is here alone that this expression has a place.

Moreover, far from raising the level of his intellectual and moral life, this, with the hysterical subject, becomes rapidly degenerate, without consciousness, without attention, without personal ideas, desires, will or motive force. He is no longer a personality *sui juris*, he is a docile and inert instrument in the hands of the magnetizer or the charlatan who desires to take possession of him. Passively he obeys his orders, and these orders rebound throughout the whole nervous system, not only that which governs the life of relation, but even that which regulates the vegetative life, on which, in the normal state, the will, directly, has no influence. So that the suggestion may end by producing or imitating every organic trouble or illness. Such is its marvellous power over these poor unbalanced beings. They are thus made to turn in every direction, and the mad movement of their ideas, their feelings, their inclinations, shows clearly enough the depth to which they have fallen. The hysterical patient is, truly, no longer a person, but a thing—*res*, as the Romans used to say of their slaves.

Is there, then, anyone who fails to see the striking contrast between these two psychical states of ecstasy and hysteria ? Does history testify to an intellectual or moral depreciation among our ecstatic saints, or, on the contrary, to a marvellous transformation, even to that heroic and exalted degree which reaches to the confines of the divine, and which has been called a deification ? How great, indeed, was St Teresa's inspiration when it was this very " transformation of the soul " that she made the touchstone of divine ecstasy, sufficient to distinguish it from the false !

In her most lofty ecstasies we see that this great mystic always retains full possession of herself. Her consciousness, her attention, her memory, are intact, as is testified by the delicate and well-sought analyses that she has made for us respecting

all that she saw or experienced in those wonderful states. Still less have we ever seen her memory so disaggregated as to make her play the double role of a dual personality. Certainly she would not have failed loyally to notify so curious a phenomenon. She is always herself even when she feels herself raised above her own natural forces by power from on high. Her understanding then becomes refined to a degree of acuteness which pierces the highest mysteries of faith; her will is immersed therein even to an heroic virtue which renders her capable of supporting the most severe physical and moral trials. She triumphs over every obstacle and quells the weakness of the body. "It matters little if I die," she often said. What was more to her than either health or death was the accomplishment of her mission, the doing of the work of God, in spite of the opposition of the world and the resistance of her sisters, whom even so she desired to sanctify. Moreover, at the time of her death the great Carmelite reform was an accomplished fact, and the immortal work she founded was already productive in fruits of sanctity.

What we state respecting the intellectual and moral superiority of St Teresa is so manifest that the physicians—there are even Catholics among them—who, in spite of this, have wished to maintain her so-called hysteria without too greatly violating facts, have been reduced to having to admit that this saint, never having had the "mental state" proper to hysterical subjects, her hysteria was essentially different from the known cases. "St Teresa," one of them writes, "is wholly distinguished from the ordinary type of hysterical case by the vigorous character of her mind, the enduring energy of her will, and so on."[1]

"She greatly differs,"[2] says another, "from some women who have suffered from this malady, on account of her intellectual and moral qualities." And this same doctor, in order to explain the absence of intellectual hysteria in one who was truly hysterical, adds that he clearly sees there "a continual miracle brought about by divine grace, which thus willed to make manifest its power."[2]

In our opinion, the greatest miracle would be to see something deprived of its essence yet still remaining worthy of its name. It would be more than a miracle, for it would

[1] Fr. Hahn, *Revue des quest. scientif.*, 1883, vol. xiii, p. 553.

[2] Dr. Péralès, quoted by Grégoire de Saint-Joseph, *La pretendue hystérie de sainte Thérèse.*

be a contradiction in terms and a manifest impossibility. Hysteria without the essential elements of hysteria is no longer hysteria, and science has no longer any right to continue its name without its reality. Nor is it only the intellectual loss that is lacking to our Saint, but also the physiological.

St Teresa herself protests, for, after having described the hysterical crisis, which she knew perfectly well, by its classical symptoms—convulsions, tightening of the chest, hysterical "boule," hæmorrhage, tears, sighing and sobbing, and so on, followed on awakening by forgetfulness and fatigue—our Saint definitely declares that in her ecstasies *she never experienced anything like it*.[1] And she adds that ecstasy never wearied her body nor injured her health. Much to the contrary, she said that she never remembered having received such a favour, even during her most serious illness, without experiencing sensible improvement.[2] It was not, therefore, in any way morbid.

What, then, is the malady which she acknowledges? Although a retrospective diagnosis is always doubtful, we may, with some assurance, conjecture from the descriptions given in her *Life*—it is the opinion of eminent Catholic physicians—that it was a case of intermittent malarial fever, very common at that time in her country, some symptoms of which may be analogous to those found in hysteria, though taken alone they are not enough to constitute it.[3]

[1] *Castle*, 4th M., ch. ii. [2] *Life*, ch. xviii.

[3] The thesis concerning St Teresa's hysteria was maintained by a learned Belgian Jesuit, Fr. Hahn, in a memoir inserted in the *Revue scientifique* of Brussels, in 1883, under the title: *Phénomènes hystériques et révélations*. It was first of all awarded a prize by the Salamanca Academy, in a competition in honour of St Teresa. Nevertheless, it was placed on the Index at Rome in 1886. If we have rightly understood the main idea of the author, it may be stated thus: On the supposition that a saint might be both ecstatic and hysterical, the dual experience of two groups of phenomena, natural and supernatural, would be a new and very precious guarantee that, by comparing them, he is not deceived when describing the second. Now this was the case with St Teresa.

Doubtless, we grant, the hypothesis is ingenious and not without value as an *argumentum ad hominem* against unbelievers. But we do not admit it without reserve, for if the alternation of true and false ecstasies in the same consciousness renders discernment more easy, as regards the public, on the contrary, it cannot fail to throw suspicion on the whole. And again, is this blending of the true and false really worthy of the gifts of God? We do not think so.

Nor do we in any way consent to transforming the hypothesis into a thesis by admitting the hysteria of St Teresa. The fact has

Besides, the illness from which St Teresa suffered did not exist among the other ecstatic saints who, by their intellectual and moral superiority, their influence on their own time and posterity, are the glory of the Church and the honour of humankind. Such are St Gregory the Great, St Bernard, St Francis of Assisi, St Dominic, St Ignatius, St Jane Chantal, St Catherine of Siena, and numbers of other stars in our Christian firmament. Nor is there the shadow of a pretext for connecting states that are so dissimilar and so opposed as divine ecstasy and the hysterical crisis.

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yet to be proved, and the writer has certainly not produced any decisive proof. We grant that in 1536 she experienced a severe crisis—the only one in her life—which she loyally described in Chapter V of her *Life*; but what does that prove ?

In the same way that a youth, at the critical age for example, may experience on one or two occasions some neuropathic accidents without on that account being unbalanced, and that such a tendency, if it existed, might be corrected either by increasing age or by divers means, including a meritorious effort of will, so our Saint in her youth might have experienced, when twenty-one years old, certain symptoms suggestive of hysteria without on that account being an hysterical subject.

But we in no way grant that this severe crisis springs from hysteria. In a learned medical survey Dr. Goix has shown this in an enlightening way. The diagnostic signs of hysteria, known to St Teresa, are lacking in her case (convulsions, hysterical *boule*, hysterogenic zones, shrinkage of the field of vision, etc.), whilst all the signs of malarial fever, which infested her country, are found. Notably (1) intermittent fever, quartan or double quartan, from which according to her Letters she suffered so long, and which " are never accompanied by either the syncopes, the pains or the convulsions of hysteria "; (2) the cachexia, of which the physicians of Avila state that she died, " which is one of the usual final results of malarial cachexia," whilst " the hysteric shows a remarkable preservation of stoutness, even for years . . . in spite of the frequency and intensity of the attacks, in spite of lack of sufficient food, often even in spite of constant vomiting." We omit the other tokens of opposition.

" This crisis," the eminent doctor concludes, " recalls point by point the comatose form of intermittent malarial fever, as still noticed in our time. All the details given by the illustrious Carmelite reformer, from the biting of the tongue to the difficulty of deglutition and the contraction, are found mentioned in contemporary observations. . . . St Teresa then was never overtaken by hysteria. This is an indisputable scientific conclusion." " Besides, scientifically we have no right to conclude *a priori* from the hysteria of anyone, that his ecstasy is of an hysterical nature " (Dr. Goix, *Annales de phil. chrét.*, June, 1896, pp. 268 *ff.* *Cf.* Grégoire de Saint-Joseph, *La prétendue hystérie de sainte Thérèse*, Lyons, 1895; P. de San, of Louvain, *Étude pathologico-théologique sur Sainte Thérèse*).

As will be seen, the great defect in the *sophisticated* argument of our opponents consists in concluding that there is a total or essential resemblance between ecstasy and hysteria because of a partial and very accidental likeness in the former with one of the phases in the latter. The passional attitudes of hysteria sometimes imitate ecstatic attitudes; so ecstasy and hysteria are identical! M. Richer naïvely states this paralogism when he describes ecstasy as "a detached fragment of greater hysteria." To which Dr. Imbert vigorously replies:

"But the physician is not permitted to confuse pathological states that are different by relying on one common symptom. The method of the *detached fragment*, a wholly Salpetrian invention, has never been admitted in the classification of disease. Certain rare hysterical subjects, when in passional attitude, for a few moments assume the air of ecstatics, and at once Dr. Richer makes of them saints like St Teresa in full rapture, without remarking that after this false pose these same patients return to their habitual state of wantonness or fury. . . . M. Richer in this is like the ignorant quack who, finding fever in those suffering from phthisis, sore throat, or smallpox, proclaims that all these are but one and the same malady because the *detached fragment*, fever, is common to all these morbid states. It is difficult to imagine anything more contrary to reason."[1]

Moreover, as we have shown, the *detached fragment* itself is very different; the ecstatic passional attitude of the hysterical subject is only a pitiable grimace, an unworthy caricature of divine ecstasy, which can only deceive those who are entirely lacking in Christian feeling.

And it is not only an *essential difference* from the physiological point of view, but also, from the psychological standpoint, an absolute *opposition*. There is, indeed, an entire opposition between the mental disaggregation of the hysterical patient and the perfect self-mastery of the ecstatic; between that amazing power of hysterical suggestibility in which the soul realizes in the body everything it pleases to imagine or that is suggested to it, and that alienation of the senses of the ecstatic in which the soul, wholly absorbed in God, appears to withdraw itself from the body, thus allowing the sensible and even the vegetative life to fade. Hysteria is the maximum degree of the disordered power of the soul over the body, whereas ecstasy, on the contrary, is the maximum degree of

[1] Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre, *La stigmatisation*, p. 457.

abandonment of the body by the soul, wholly plunged in God. Hysteria is a sinking of the soul in matter; ecstasy is an exalted freeing of the soul. Their assimilation, then, is a senseless leap in the dark.

§ 6

Ecstasy and hypnosis

So far the attempt to compare divine ecstasy with divers neuroses has not been happy. Catalepsy has presented but an inadequate resemblance to it in its physiological characteristics and an absolute opposition to it in the psychological; hysteria, an absolute opposition in both. We shall now attempt another trial by comparing the ecstatic state with artificial somnambulism. Is this any more likely to succeed?

At first, if we judge by appearances only, there is, indeed, a certain resemblance. Which of us has not seen somnambulists in fashionable hypnotic meetings reproducing enraptured or ecstatic attitudes at the bidding of their instigators, imitating the sublime scenes of saints in ecstasy, at least so far as a caricature can mimic the real?

Here is an *example* borrowed from a specialist in magnetism: "After a quarter of an hour, Marie (his somnambulist) is found in the ecstatic state. . . . She is insensible to the hand that touches her and deaf to the voice which calls her. Finally, after another quarter of an hour, Mary sighs and says: 'I see, as though in heaven, an infinite number of angels. . . . I am in an immense habitation, the canopy of which is lost in the skies. . . . It is filled with a dazzling light. . . . The Virgin Mary is present. . . . She is more beautiful than yesterday. . . . Her robe is white, as is also her veil, with a fringe of gold. . . . Her Son holds a rosary. . . . The Virgin, standing, holds an open book in which I first see the letter I, then an H surmounted with a cross, then an S. . . . My angel to-day is clothed in a white tunic with a violet girdle; he has fair hair; he is as small as a new-born child; he holds a palm in his hand. . . ." The seer continues for some time in this trivial strain; the operator asks a few questions, then awakens her, but on awakening she forgets everything."[1]

Another case of somnambulism, less trivial and less childish, because it exhibits certain literary, poetical, and even scientific

[1] G. Billot, *Recherches psychologiques sur le magnétisme animal.*

pretensions, is that of Helen Smith, recounted by Professor Flournoy of Geneva. She, in ecstasy, makes a voyage from India to the planet Mars and gives us some marvellous descriptions of it. This scientific novel has not even the value of Jules Verne's *Voyage to the Moon*, which used to delight our childhood, and suggests no transcendent revelation. It is the product of a mind educated, doubtless, but with mad imagination, in which childish repetitions take the place of those creations of genius which are always absent.

After this, other somnambulists visited Saturn, Mars, and other mysterious planets, without producing any advance to science.

Here is another case related by Fr. de Bonniot and drawn by him from *Paroles d'un somnambule*, by J. Ollivier. We quote it in turn because of its claim to high theological revelations:

"The *somnambulist:* 'God is everywhere!' This we already surmised, and so far there is nothing new. But now the unexpected begins. After stopping a moment to contemplate the greatness of God and the beauty of his work, and after expressing in his face feelings of admiration and astonishment, the revelation begins in these words: 'There are four men who have understood the work of God. *Socrates* foresaw it. *Christ* summed it up and taught it. *Joseph Haydn* made it pass into our feelings. *George Sand* developed it within us: God is sublime! He may be defined as Love and Will!' Here the somnambulist prostrates himself on the ground in a state of ecstasy. He then rises and, in a loud and penetrating voice, intones the psalm *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes; laudate eum omnes populi.* Then follows a long development ending with these words: '*George Sand* is the revealer who unravels the world by her writings; her word is the manifestation of the thought of the world. . . . How great is that company composed of *Pierre Leroux*, *Lamennais*, *Béranger*, *Michelet*, *Quinet*, and others like them! . . . Study all the teachings of these great men, join to them the teachings established by *Christ* and evolved by *George Sand*, weigh all that in the balance of your consciousness, and you will be learned!'"

Well! After having "weighed all that in the balance of our consciousness," we briefly state that no man, not only no inspired man, but no man gifted merely with ordinary common sense, could utter such rubbish. Our somnambulist,

in addition to his admitted alienation of the senses, evidently suffers from an alienation of the mind !

It is useless to multiply further examples of somnambulistic crises that imitate visions or ecstasy. Those given suffice to establish a *parallel* which will show an essential difference between them in their *causes*, *nature*, and *effects*.

I. *Causes*.—Whereas every hypnotized subject has a hypnotizer, the ecstatic has none.[1] The appearance of divine ecstasy, like its duration, is totally independent of our will or of the will of others; somnambulism, on the contrary, so entirely depends on it that it has become a common art, popularized throughout the world. All the great cities of Europe and of the New World have their courses or clinics where hypnotism, applied to medicine and even to surgery, is taught and practised.

The reason for this difference is obvious; divine ecstasy is a gift of God, inaccessible to the will of man; somnambulism is the effect of a neurosis which human art sets in motion or suspends at will. Every somnambulist conceals an hysterical subject, or at least one that is predisposed to hysteria, and everyone that is hysterical is a marvellously apt " subject " for somnambulism. This is the formal teaching of Charcot and the school of the Salpêtrière: " The hypnotic state is a neurosis; the best subjects for study are those addicted to greater hysteria." And Dr. Cerise has insisted on this main point: " I have said, and I repeat, that somnambulism, in order to be induced, must be in the subject, already sick, in a state of impending predisposition."[2] The ecstasy of somnambulists, then, is morbid and in no way divine; it has for its cause a deterioration, and probably an exhaustion, of the cerebral influx.

The *instrumental cause* by which divine ecstasy effects sleep or unconsciousness is always mental; it is the intensity of a

[1] In cases of possession or of obsession, it might be asked whether the devil is not able to act the part of hypnotizer. Fr. de Bonniot and a number of theologians think so. " Possession," says the former, " is due either to hypnosis or to an infernal spirit playing the role of hypnotizer. . . . In the one case it is the devil, in the other it is the experimenter, who takes possession of the subject." In this is almost the whole difference.

We consider that this view is in complete agreement with the descriptions given by St Teresa, but we leave this to the study of diabolic mysticism.

[2] Quoted by H. Joly, *Imaginat.*, 4, 51.

very lofty or transcendent intellectual intuition. That which provokes somnambulism is very often physical and sensible; magnetic passes, gazing at some glittering object, or the influence of some dominating will. This mechanism, so very different, manifests an essential difference in the phenomena produced.

II. The psychological *nature* of the ecstatic state, which we have already fully described, may be summed up in few words: it is the zenith of the higher faculties of the soul—understanding, will, and love. Here is a sign of transcendence which somnambulism can never imitate. Everything appertaining to the latter is usually trivial and common, as the above examples show. Foolish reveries abound in it, and popular philosophical and theological errors in vogue often enough teem there.[1] Certain clinics or certain theatres occasionally even seem to obey a word of command and to be submitted to a single impulsion on the part of certain sects, perhaps of the devil himself.

The transcendence of the understanding of the ecstatic is also shown by a *lucidity* or second sight which cannot be counterfeited by the somnambulist. Doubtless the latter also, through this state of somnambulism, acquires a delicate sensibility and most remarkable penetration. He is affected, even at a distance, by invisible effluvia which radiate from the brain and from the senses of the hypnotizer; the two brains vibrate in unison, and the one is able to command the other. Thence those marvellous effects of lucidity, so often put to the test during the last twenty years, of which we have spoken above. But in this, contrary to the somnambulists, our holy ecstatics penetrate the thoughts, not, indeed, of the hypnotizers under whose subjection they are—for such do not exist—but, on the contrary, to all those who are under their own. Thus, St Teresa conjectured the thoughts, the feelings, the temptations of the Sisters whom she had under her control, and the same gift has been testified to in St Catherine of Siena, St Vincent Ferrer, the Curé d'Ars, and all our great mystics, so that they cannot be compared to magnetized subjects, but rather to magnetizers who read the thoughts of those they magnetize. Now this reverses the laws of hypnotism. Never were Charcot, Bernheim, or their most famous disciples able to conjecture

[1] M. Pierre Janet, in *Automatisme psychologique*, recognizes this: "These lucubrations, whilst they present certain intelligent combinations, are in reality dreadfully stupid, nor is it necessary to sound the mysteries beyond the grave in order to write such nonsense."

the thoughts of their "subjects." They are never the *diviners*, but always the *divined*. The contrast is striking.

A third mark of transcendence in the intellectual activity of the holy ecstatics is the phenomenon known as the *recall*. It consists in the acknowledgement by the ecstatic of his religious superiors or of any person, cleric or layman, delegated by them to give him orders, and in his obedience to those orders, even should they consist in a suspension of the ecstasy. This recognition of those sent by God, in an environment in which the ecstatic, whose senses are suspended, neither sees, hears, nor knows anyone, is a marvellous fact, far above the natural powers. Let us be shown a somnambulist addressed by someone other than his hypnotizers, simply because, even in a secret and invisible way, he has been invested with a formal order by the lawful authority! Whereas examples abound of our holy mystics being insensible to every order, sacerdotal or medical, yet wonderfully docile to the least order or even simple wish of one delegated by the bishop or prior.[1] The fact has been officially verified in our own day on several occasions, notably with regard to Louise Lateau, in 1873, by Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre.[2]

With this power of recognizing at a distance those sent by God, we may include that of recognizing, also at a distance, holy things, such as relics among divers other dead bones, or consecrated hosts amongst unconsecrated altar-breads. This gift of *hierognosis*, with which our ecstatic saints are endowed, is fundamentally of the same nature. It is the *sense of the divine*, marvellously extended and apprehending, through an exquisite delicacy, as well as God himself, all that is a more or less distant radiation and, as it were, a shadow of God.

In view of all this, verified a thousand times and undeniable, the reader must feel himself in the presence of a supernatural order of facts, infinitely higher than all our grotesque somnambulisms. Between these two spheres of phenomena there is all the distance of earth from heaven, the human from the divine.

III. The *effects*.—This new test—which is of the greatest importance, since the tree is judged by its fruit—may be summed up briefly. The effects of hypnotism, especially if often repeated, are invariably serious mental and physical disorders. The mind becomes disaggregated to the point of stupidity or madness; the body is weakened and finds itself

[1] See Görres, ii, 41; Ribet, *La mystique*.
[2] *Les stigmatisations*, vol. ii, p. 303.

laid bare to every morbid influence. Moreover, hypnotism is, in principle, forbidden by the moral law.

Divine ecstasy, on the contrary, always produces an uplifting of the higher faculties, an enlarging of the soul, and if it does not always strengthen the health of the body, at least it never injures it. We have seen this stated several times by St Teresa herself, whose authoritative experience is enough for us.

Thus, to *sum up*, the starting-point, the course and the end of false somnambulistic ecstasy are so opposed to those of divine ecstasy that, after having studied it even slightly, it is a matter of great surprise that it is possible for anyone to be led away by a few purely material and accidental resemblances. Only common folk can mistake and confuse false diamonds with true, common glass beads with precious pearls.

How is it then that so many minds of good faith have let themselves be deceived? St Teresa answers us that *experience* is lacking to them, and that in order to grasp certain fine distinctions—as, for instance, that between true and false diamonds—a certain experience or experimental education is indispensable.

"These satanic visions," she writes, "are very different things; and even he who shall have attained to the prayer of quiet only will, I believe, detect them by those results of them which I described. . . . They are most easily recognized; and if a soul consents not to its own delusion, I do not think that Satan will be able to deceive it, provided it walks in humility and singleness of heart. He who shall have had the true vision, coming from God, detects the false visions at once; . . . Satan very quickly betrays himself. Thus, then, as I believe, Satan can do no harm to anyone who has had experience of these things."[1]

But failing this inward experience, which may be lacking to us, which would enable us to put our finger with unmistakable certainty on that which is divine, we have the lessons of outward experience that are largely sufficient at least to convince us that divine ecstasy has nothing in common with a pathological case.

Pathology, in fact, is entirely dominated by two general facts, which express its two indisputable fundamental laws. The first is that every constitutional malady, such as a neurosis,

[1] *Life*, ch. xxviii.

is transmissible by heredity. Thus hysteria runs in families. Now divine ecstasy is by no means hereditary. The second is that every illness means a lessening of life, physical life always, and almost always indirectly the life of the mind. "That which distinguishes illness," rightly says Dr. Goix, "is the subordination of all its characteristics to one single end: the destruction or at least the lessening of life. Now this injurious tendency is not observable in that state which St Teresa calls ecstasy."[1]

Indeed, St Teresa, far from quitting her ecstasies exhausted, weakened, and impotent, leaves them greatly strengthened both physically and morally, or, as she herself states, "healthy, and even stronger."[2] And if ecstasy occurred during her illnesses she experienced from it a relief and a renewal of her health.[3]

And these are not words without meaning, since her ecstasies coincided with the most complete unfolding of her physical and intellectual activity, and the foundation of numerous monasteries and Carmelite reforms, the vitality of which still continues after three centuries, dates precisely from this period in her life.

We are thus forced to admit that true and divine ecstasy does not belong to any class of morbid phenomena with which it has been desired to associate it.

§ 7

The natural ecstasy of philosophers and scholars

Our opponents, after having vainly connected divine ecstasy with the divers pathological states which we have just been studying, endeavour to compare it with the so-called natural ecstasies of philosophers, great scholars, or great artists. We admit that it would be a cleverer way of evading the supernatural to reduce it to a normal phenomenon, a purely natural

[1] Goix, *Annales de phil. chrét.*, June, 1896, p. 277.

[2] *Life*, ch. xx.

[3] "I do not remember, however ill I might have been when our Lord had mercy upon me in this way, that I ever felt the worse for it—on the contrary, I was always better afterwards. But so great a blessing, what harm can it do? The outward effects are so plain as to leave no doubt possible that there must have been some great cause, seeing that it thus robs us of our bodily powers with so much joy, in order to leave them greater" (*Life*, ch. xviii).

one, and this method of comparing our holy ecstatics to men of genius rather than to neuropatic subjects and to the unfortunate deranged folk in our asylums is certainly more respectful and less repellent. It remains for us to follow them in this shifting to new ground.

The problem.—It has been said with truth that great men are *distracted* or *abstracted*, and these expressions have a much deeper meaning than appears at first sight. Distraction and abstraction are two sides of the same natural phenomenon. It is the abstraction within, or the concentration of the mind on some special object—such, for instance, as the pursuit of some ardent problem or the contemplation of some fascinating object—which outwardly produces distraction or inattention to all other objects. This inattention, however, does not ordinarily go so far as total unconsciousness of all around us, for outward sensations are not abolished, nor are movements suspended; still less does it go so far as to produce total forgetfulness of an actual pain.

Outward distraction, following on abstraction or inward concentration, is then only a *beginning of natural ecstasy*. In order for ecstasy to be complete it is necessary for this double phenomenon, inward and outward, to be emphasized sufficiently to produce two essential things:

1. A rapture of mind of sufficiently great energy to bring about this alienation of the senses in a man healthy of body and mind, who remains conscious of what he experiences.

2. A veritable and general alienation of the senses. Veritable, that is to say, not only the cessation of their actual operation, but a real powerlessness to respond to organic excitation. General, that is, extended to every sense, both those that are external (anæsthesia), and the internal sense of pain (analgesia), and to motricity (plastic muscular rigidity), as we have already explained at length.

Well, then, is such a rapture of mind, producing such an alienation of the senses, possible naturally without a miracle, when it relates only to some object naturally accessible to human reason or to the faith of the Christian? And if possible, is it real?

Such is the problem of the possibility or impossibility, the existence or non-existence, of natural ecstasy.

On the question of mere *possibility* all are more or less agreed.

Contemporary psychology has verified and unanimously

accepted the principle laid down by St Thomas: *Intensa meditatio unius abstrahit ab aliis.*[1] An idea, an image, a sentiment, any object whatever, when somewhat impressive, either in itself or in relation to a given person, is able to absorb all the attention and every power of the soul to the point of producing abstraction and unconsciousness of all other objects. This is the well-known theory of the fixed idea.

The controversy does not rest, then, on the pure possibility of natural ecstasy, but on the *existence* of an object naturally capable of producing such effects, at least in a healthy subject in the normal state. An important condition, for if the subject be exhausted, sickly, and afflicted, for example, with a neurosis, an object in itself insignificant—a luminous point, a flower, a bird—may suffice, and we can prove only some false morbid ecstasy, a pathological case, the possibility and the existence of which, as we have fairly stated, is certain and undoubted by anyone.

If there exist, in the natural order, objects of contemplation of so marvellous a power, natural ecstasy, thousands of years ago, ought to have made manifest its existence and been duly established. Now it is on this very question of existence that, as a matter of fact, controversy still goes on, without any apparent approach to agreement.[2]

We shall put forward the *two opinions*, the one which denies and the other which admits the existence of true ecstasies that are purely natural, and shall indicate the attitude that contemporary apologetics ought to take respecting these two points of view.

I. *Opinion that denies the existence of natural ecstasy.*—Fr. Poulain, among our contemporaries, has been the most resolute champion of this negation. Among physiologists and physicians may also be cited Dr. Lefebvre of Louvain. But the number of his partisans among men of science tends more and more to increase.

This opinion is grounded first of all on facts. Have natural ecstasies, in the sense above described, ever been notified?

Mystical writers, such as Schram and Brancati, have thought

[1] I-II, q. xxviii, a. 3.

[2] *Cf.* Fr. Rolli, *La magie moderne*, pp. 258, 263 (for existence); Dom Maréchaux, *Le merveilleux divin*, p. 226; Fr. Poulain, *Des extases naturelles;* Dr. Lefebvre, *Louise Lateau, étude médicale*, p. 236 (against existence).

to see natural ecstasy in divers accounts in Holy Writ, such as the " ecstasy " of the Queen of Saba in the presence of Solomon, or the " stupefaction " of Jacob when he heard that his beloved son Joseph was not dead. But such exegesis is not to be taken seriously. The former is but a play of words on a metaphor, and the second confuses the sickly state known as *stupor* with true ecstasy; we shall insist no further.

We pass on to facts drawn from profane history. They are not very numerous, and may be reduced to a few classical examples.

1. First there is Archimedes leaving his bath in order to cry *Eureka* through all the streets of Syracuse, through which he ran like a madman, without perceiving that he had forgotten to dress himself. Undoubtedly the distraction—if it is truly authentic—is, even for a great man, somewhat strong, but we can discover therein none of the physiological characteristics of ecstasy, anæsthesia, analgesia, muscular rigidity, and so on.

The same Archimedes, according to Livy, allowed himself to be killed without resistance at the sack of Syracuse by a soldier who had been ordered to save his life; but wholly taken up with his problem his only thought was to exclaim: " Do not disturb the circles that I have traced on the ground." Here, again, is undoubtedly distraction; but one who moves, who traces circles, speaks and is still in communication with the outer world to the point of addressing a visitor, is certainly not an ecstatic.

2. Socrates, according to a well-known passage of Plato's *Symposium*, remained standing and motionless in contemplation for a day and a night, forgetting to eat or drink, in the besieged camp at Potidaea. But the narrator does not accept personal responsibility for the anecdote; it is placed in the mouth of Alcibiades, who, after copious banquet potations, performs a pompous and poetical eulogy of Socrates, in which it is impossible, as usual in such literary and allegorical compositions, to distinguish the true from the false. There were other legends of this kind among the Greeks and Orientals: Pythagoras remained in ecstasy for ten years, Zoroaster for twenty, Epimenides for fifty. These are but fables.

3. St Thomas, when dining at the Queen's table, suddenly remained motionless with fixed eyes, without seeing or hearing anything; then he awoke and cried out: " Let us decide against the Manichees !"[1] According to Baltellus, the same

[1] Benedict XIV, *De beatif. sanct.*, bk. iii, c. xlix, n. 3.

saint was once so absorbed in reflection on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, that he allowed the candle which he was holding in his hand to become consumed and to burn his fingers without his perceiving it. Another time he submitted his leg to the surgeon's cauterizing iron without consciousness of the pain. But St Thomas also had divine ecstasies, and he alone would have been able to instruct us on the nature of these two cases. Without the need of an ecstasy properly so-called, pain may be relieved or may pass unnoticed among distraction, such as the charm of music, certain games, or the pursuit of some high mathematical problem, as is related of Pascal. Here, again, the observations are not complete.

4. Great men, however, have not the exclusive privilege of powerful distractions; they are also shared by feeble minds, and above all by brains rendered anæmic by any excess, nay, even by exaggerated fasts and penances. With the least spiritual consolation such persons can become abstracted to the extent of experiencing complete alienation of the senses. St Teresa, as we have seen, often warned her beloved daughters against an illusion to which the weakness of their sex rendered them more liable. They then mistook their exhaustion for rapture, although, she says, this was nothing other than waste of time, since there can be no thought in a swoon, and it also meant ruin to the health. We know how she cured these poor sick folk: she obliged them to sleep and eat more, to reduce their penances and suppress their prayers.[1] Let us not, in turn, mistake their swooning for natural ecstasy.

5. Examples of ecstasy *at will*, alleged by the partisans of natural ecstasy, are still less conclusive and more suspect.

The priest Restitutus, of whom St Augustine tells us, lost the use of his senses at will, but we are not told what he contemplated during that time, or even whether he thought of anything. It may have been only a hysterical crisis or quackery.

The Hindu contemplatives, called Yogi, and certain monks of Mount Athos, have the reputation of being able, by very simple methods, to enter into ecstasy at will, and to remain therein for a long time. They do not even need a sublime idea or very lofty sentiment in order to concentrate their attention within themselves; all that is required is a most ordinary image, fixedly contemplated for a certain time, for them to become preoccupied and lose consciousness. Occa-

[1] *Castle*, 4th M., ch. iii; 6th M., ch. iv.

sionally, after long training, they reach the point of being able to suspend breathing completely by stopping the throat with the tongue folded backwards, after cutting the frænum. Thence a comatose state, similar to that of the hibernating animals, which they make pass for ecstasy or for fusion in the great All. Forestalling the modern processes of hypnotism, the Hindus gaze at some shining object very near them, and certain Yogi gaze simply at the end of their nose. The monks of Mount Athos, seated and motionless, stare fixedly at the middle of the abdomen, whence the name *omphalophysites*, which has been given them from the eleventh century; a grotesque practice, greatly in vogue at that period at Constantinople, as is animal magnetism in our own day.

They claimed, in this state, to contemplate the light of Thabor, whilst the Hindus thought to discover *nirvana*, or absorption into the universal soul of things; but in our opinion, on the contrary, they ended in annihilation of thought and feeling.

As a matter of fact, these phenomena of hypnosis were known to a small number of initiates from the furthest antiquity. Scenes of exaltation, occasionally to the point of madness, of hallucination and of delirium, by means of toxic substances, were added, just as concentrated alcohol, ether, protoxide of nitrogen, and a thousand other poisons to the nervous system are employed to-day.

Among the Egyptians, Persians, Medes, Greeks, and Romans, the oracles were obtained by analogous means. The famous tripod on which the Pythoness of the Delphic temple used to mount, closed the opening of a cavern whence toxic and delirious vapours were exhaled which rapidly shortened her days. Occasionally the unfortunate victim fell down and died whilst giving her oracles.

Now all these cases of ecstasy at will appear to be clearly pathological; they are false ecstasies doubtless complicated by charlatanism, and perhaps also by devilry, at least among idolatrous peoples; they are in no way, as has been claimed, examples of true and natural ecstasy, such as we have defined it. They cannot therefore prove the thesis in question.

After having eliminated these last two categories of facts, there remain only the first three—Archimedes, Socrates, and St Thomas—of which we have shown the smallness of evidence and even the emptiness; we may therefore conclude that the

existence of natural ecstasy, real and in no way pathological, has never been demonstrated.

From this we draw a new argument of the highest importance. "If human nature," Fr. Poulain ably writes, "truly possessed this power, we should not be reduced to a mere three or four anecdotes during fifteen hundred or two thousand years. We should have found a sequence of examples among great thinkers throughout all the centuries. We should also find contemporary cases. During the last two or three hundred years Europe has been filled with scholars of the first order who have pondered deeply over metaphysics and mathematics. Now not once have they been observed in an attitude of ecstasy, with the eyes fixed, the arms extended towards the theorem contemplated. No ecstasy is cited on the part of Newton, Leibnitz, or Euler, of Lagrange, Laplace, or Gauss, of Rieman, Kronecker, or Hermite, and so on. If in medicine a theory were so little confirmed by experience no one would venture to enunciate it."[1]

Dr. Lefebvre remarks that ecstasy might be observed also in the "capitalist who calculates some operation which will raise him to the highest summit of fortune or precipitate him into the ignominy of poverty." Ecstasy ought frequently to be produced under the most common circumstances. "Do we not see every day irresistible influences of incomparable impetuosity? When the ardour of the senses is added to that of the soul, does it not result in a half-bestial, half-human passion whose violence terrifies us?" Such passions ought to alienate the senses. "To sum up, if ecstasy could be produced by excess of attention, by play of imagination, ardour of thought or sense, it ought to be a *common and daily* occurrence. Physicians who detect humanity in its every weakness and all its mysteries have not met with it in our time. . . . I conclude that *true ecstasy, ecstasy of purely psychical origin, apart from all illness of the nervous system, is a myth.*"[2]

From a philosophical standpoint, the first conclusion to be derived from so solid an argument seems to us to be this. As a matter of fact, whatever be the theoretical possibility, there is no object in this world known to human reason or the Christian faith the most intense natural contemplation of which is capable of producing alienation of the senses or bringing about ecstasy. Mystical contemplation of God alone,

[1] *Des extases naturelles*, p. 7.
[2] Dr. Lefebvre, *Louise Lateau*, p. 236.

through a sense of the divine, which makes his presence felt and experienced, is able to produce such an effect. It is impossible to see or feel God, even more or less obscurely, without at once dying to the sensible life: *Non videbit me homo et vivet.*[1] This is also the thought of St Thomas: *Oportet mentem quae divinam substantiam videt totaliter a corporalibus sensibus esse absolutam, vel per mortem, vel per aliquem raptum.*[2]

This opinion has also the advantage of explaining to us why it is that the unconsciousness of divine ecstasy is neither an infirmity nor an illness which injures health, but a natural and normal consequence of this ecstasy. In the same way that it is not a morbid sign for a perfectly poised man to bend under a burden of a hundredweight, and that to reach the limit of his natural strength is not a malady, so to be crushed by some superhuman action is not a sign of illness in man, but only a weakness proper to his nature and a normal imperfection. Hysterical subjects, on the contrary, who become unconscious at the sight of a shining point or at the sound of a tom-tom, are not mystics, but folk who are ill. Outside cases of mental weakness or neurosis, a superhuman force alone, by invading the mind of man, is able normally to render him unconscious. All other cases are pathological.

The second conclusion, from the apologetic point of view, is no less important. Since there is no true ecstasy in the natural order, all veritable ecstasies belong to the supernatural. Now the ecstasies of the saints, in no way morbid, are the perfect and even unique type of true ecstasy; they belong, then, to the supernatural order, and their natural source, insisted on by rationalists, is thus shown by the facts of history to be false.

However well founded this first opinion may seem to us, we should not be averse from adopting the second, if the progress of medical or psycho-physiological science happened to discover new facts showing the existence of true, purely natural ecstasy. We shall now examine the new apologetic position that it would be then necessary for us to adopt.

II. *Opinion accepting the existence of natural ecstasy.*—The theologians who adopt this view rely far less on the somewhat fragile authority of the historical facts to which we have just referred, than on the teaching of masters of theology such as St Thomas, Suarez, Gerson, Schram, Cardinal Brancati de

[1] *Exod.* xxxiii 20.
[2] *Contra Gent.*, III, c. xlvii. *Cf.* II-II, q. clxxv, a. 4, 5.

Laurea, and Benedict XIV himself, who constantly speak of natural ecstasy. But in order to avoid all misunderstanding it will be well to have recourse to the texts cited, to understand the point of view from which these writers regard the matter and the definition they give of the word. Now St Thomas,[1] in dividing ecstasy into natural, diabolical and divine, uses this word *ecstasy* in its etymological sense: it is a state in which one is " out of oneself," and comprises the sick who lose the use of their senses. He even makes use of the word *rapture* to express an access of anger or fear. With regard to natural ecstasy, in the sense in which we have been careful to define it, from which we have excluded every pathological state, he does not even speak of it, still less did he ever formally maintain its existence. We would say the same of the other theologians cited. Benedict XIV calls " all alienation of the senses brought about by natural causes, like the malady known as catalepsy," by the name *ecstasy*.[2]

In the same way Gerson[3] calls rapture, *raptus*, the violent distraction " customary to painters and artists devoted to their imaginations." We see in how wide a sense these words *ecstasy* and *rapture* are understood, and how mistaken we should be in giving them a bearing they do not possess. The point these theologians had in view was to distinguish divine ecstasy in the lives of the saints from all its sickly or diabolical counterfeits, not at all to throw light on the obscure point of mysticism with which we are dealing.

Whatever may be the exegesis of these texts, let us grant for the moment the existence of natural non-morbid ecstasy, and let us examine the apologetic consequences which flow from it.

After having thus admitted that ecstasy can be a purely natural phenomenon, have we not removed from our saints the halo which divine ecstasy with its sacred rapture seemed to confer on them ? If they are no longer—the freethinker grants —either cataleptics, or subject to hysteria, or hypnotic, or unbalanced and degenerate neurotics, are not our saints at least reduced and lowered to the rank of common men, or at most to great men, men of genius perhaps, but without anything supernatural or divine ?

Certainly the objection is plausible, and more than one reader, in the wake of Fr. Poulain, will find our concession

[1] II-II, q. clxxv, a. 1 and 2.
De beatif., bk. iii, c. xlix.
De mente contempl., ch. xxi.

imprudent and to be regretted. This difficulty, however, is far from being insoluble.

First of all, since it is not the ecstasy which proves the sanctity, but rather the sanctity which shows the ecstasy to be divine,[1] we might, if absolutely necessary, eliminate divine ecstasy from our saints without on that account renouncing the maintenance of their sanctity and the other divine phenomena that transfigured their lives. The saints would still remain on our altars. But there are other and better answers to make.

If there are natural and false ecstasies, this does not prevent there being also truly divine ones. Just as the existence of false money, far from excluding the good, on the contrary supposes and requires it, for if there were no true gold there could be no false or counterfeit. It is enough for us to know that it is not impossible to distinguish them. Now it is possible, and even relatively easy, to distinguish false ecstasy from true.

Even when a so-called natural ecstasy has no negative characteristic incompatible with the divine, such as a morbid and pernicious symptom, or else some convulsive, unruly, or unseemly aspect, unworthy of the gravity and holiness of all that comes from God, there would still be positive signs wherewith to distinguish it; for truly divine ecstasy has always a character of real transcendence which cannot belong to a phenomenon that is purely natural.

Let us briefly recall the three chief of these: before, during, and after ecstasy.

1. *Before*, there is no effort or human artifice by way of preparation. The soul is seized by the ecstasy in a wholly passive manner, unexpectedly, and if need be, in spite of its resistance. It is an eagle, St Teresa tells us, which takes possession of a soul and raises it above itself. The cause of ecstasy, then, is outward and transcendent, whilst in natural ecstasy it can only be the artifice of man, or at least an excessive effort of attention. St Teresa, with an insistence worthy of notice, has also classed the effort to provoke ecstasy, and even the simple desire to see it produced, among the certain signs of false ecstasy.

2. *During* rapture, the ecstatic ought to have the consciousness of a direct intuition of the presence of God accompanied by infused light on some transcendental object, such as the deepest mysteries. " I think," the Saint tells us, " that if the soul learns no mysteries at any time during raptures, they are

[1] *Cf.* Benedict XIV, *De beatif.*, bk. iii, c. xlix, n. 14.

no true raptures."[1] And she repeats the same teaching many times. In fact, it can be understood that not only the revelation of divine secrets and mysteries, but the sole intuition of the presence of God, is a supernatural and transcendent phenomenon. Human reason, indeed, can only have, naturally, an indirect and inductive or abstract knowledge of the first Cause of all things; we only discover it in the mirror of creatures and by inductive reasoning, never by intuition, at least without a very special and transcendental grace.

3. *After* the heavenly favour has passed it should leave a sign of transcendence not imitable by nature. Its effect on the body, unconsciousness of the senses, being a wholly natural effect which might be produced from healthy or morbid, divine or diabolical causes, we must seek another sign of transcendence. Now St Teresa has already shown this to us in calling it a " change of soul."[2]

The transcendence of this moral transformation is shown especially by its instantaneous rapidity and its heroic degree. Without having made any effort, or even having had the time to make one, St Teresa finds herself entirely detached from the things of earth. Now time and effort are, for human nature, the two necessary factors of all its moral activity.[3] If they are lacking, and the transformation is produced all the same, or even still more, it is clear that it is not brought about naturally, but through the intervention of some supernatural agency. Let us listen to St Teresa. " Perfection," she says, " is a thing of growth . . . and this requires some time. Our Lord can so work on the soul in an instant during these raptures, that but little remains for the soul to do in order to attain to perfection."[4] She adds that she herself made the wonderful experiment of it: " From that day forth, I have had courage so great as to leave all things for God, who in one moment—and it seems to me but a moment—was pleased to change his servant into another person."[5]

[1] *Castle*, 6th M., ch. iv.

[2] This sign is also given by St Francis de Sales: " If the ecstasy is more beautiful than good, more luminous than warm, more speculative than affective, it is greatly to be doubted and deserving of suspicion" (*Treatise on the Love of God*, bk. viii, ch. vi). Nevertheless, the same holy doctor admits that ecstasy can be at one time more warm than luminous and at another more luminous than warm. Hence the distinction between ecstasy of the understanding and ecstasy of the heart, according to the element that prevails.

[3] *Life*, ch. xxi, xxxix. [4] *Ibid.*, ch. xxi. [5] *Ibid.*, ch. xxiv.

" I have seen it myself, and I know it by experience, that the soul in rapture is mistress of everything, and acquires such freedom in one hour, and even in less, as to be unable to recognize itself."[1]

Furthermore, the heroic degree of the change of soul, especially if it persists without ever flagging—that which Benedict XIV calls the *heroism of the virtues*—is no less a manifest sign of transcendence. Nature does not sacrifice itself naturally and unaided for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It needs help from on high. Now St Teresa is an authentic example of this. " It matters little if I die!" she repeats. " Blessed, then, is that soul which our Lord draws on to the understanding of the truth !. . . . Here no man fears to lose life or honour for the love of God."[2] " I considered how impossible it was for me, even if I made the effort, to have any appreciation whatever of such [temporal] things, provided our Lord did not permit me to forget what he was keeping for us."[3] What a noble uplifting of the heart is this, which reminds us of that no less lofty word of St Paul after his ecstasies: *Quis nos separabit a caritate Christi ?* . . . It was the motive of St Teresa's great work as it was of that of the great Apostle, of his whole life and of his death.

God acts, then, directly, without need of the concurrence of man, either before, during, or after the passing of the divine ecstasy. Before, in order to break in upon the soul when it least thinks it; during, in order to raise his mind and heart to transcendental operations of vision, of love, of ineffable beatitude; after, through the fruits and works of heroic sanctity, which he causes to be wrought in the soul for its own individual good, the good of the Church and of the whole of humanity.

The signs of divine action in true ecstasy are then to be found in it everywhere, whilst in the false ecstasies of the Hindus, the jugglers of every country, scholars and great men, it is nowhere visible.

§ 8

Ecstasy and subconscious forces

After the physicians who have thought to explain all mysticism by neurosis, come the psychologists who endeavour to explain it all by the mechanism of subconscious forces. It is

[1] *Life*, ch. xx. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. xxi. [3] *Ibid.*, ch. xxxviii.

certainly much more respectful towards our saints, but the new explanation is none the less far too simple and insufficient.

The words *subconscious* or *subliminal*, *subconsciousness* or the *sub-ego* are new words, still *ill defined*, and it is on the strength of their obscurity no less than that of the obscurity of the things to which they refer, that it has been possible to attribute magical virtues to them.

We do not propose to use them except in their etymological and original sense, and by the subconscious we shall understand those psychological facts which the subject does not observe—that is, which are more or less unconscious or *below* consciousness; and by subconsciousness, the state of the ego that corresponds with these facts. Thus the *sub-ego* is that part of the ego of which we have only a consciousness that is null or more or less vague.

We know that Descartes suppressed the chapter on the unconscious from his *Psychology* through his love of simplification and his hatred of obscure ideas. According to him, all psychological facts are facts of consciousness. Until then, on the contrary, the greater number of philosophers, notably the scholastics, had admitted that it is possible to feel or think without observing that one feels or thinks, thus accepting the idea of unconscious sensation or thought. These facts are indeed certain, in spite of some inevitable obscurity, for we are unable to study them directly or reflect on them, without their immediately ceasing to be unconscious.

Modern thinkers have reacted strongly against Descartes' wrongful exclusion, and the reaction, as so often happens, has exaggerated in the opposite direction. The unconscious, not being *nothing*, seems to them to have become *all*. Without speaking of Hartmann, for whom unconsciousness is absolute being and the universal divinity, certain psychologists have attributed to unconsciousness a leading role, at least equal or even superior to that of consciousness, in the guidance of intellectual, moral and religious life.

Undoubtedly its *role is important*, although inferior and secondary, and it would be very wrong to neglect the study of it. Who among us has not found, for example, that texts repeated just before going to sleep in order that they may be learnt by heart, are found far better graven on the memory when waking; or problems that have agitated our minds at night reappearing in the morning occasionally clear and perhaps

half-solved? What then has happened to us in the unconscious state of sleep?

These intellectual operations begun in full consciousness must certainly have continued automatically, and, although deprived of conscious guidance, they must have gone on all the same in the unconscious, and somehow or other have made progress in it. The accidental meeting of two images must have shown an unexpected analogy between them and generated some new idea from the encounter.

How often, again, have we not noticed that the operations we perform best were those done "without thinking about them," automatically, after the understanding has once established the mechanism and given the first impulse. W. James[1] relates that a music teacher, after having shown the method of executing a difficult passage and remarked that her pupil was unable to succeed, was content to tell her: "Stop trying and it will do itself." As a matter of fact, the pupil did succeed "without thinking of it." The same writer gives the deep explanation of it. In the work of the memory, he says, "some hidden process was started . . . by the effort, which went on after the effort ceased, and made the result come as if it came spontaneously." Such is the valuable assistance given by the subconscious mechanism.

On his side, M. Pierre Janet, in his famous thesis on *L'Automatisme psychologique*, has placed these same facts, that have become classical, in full light.

The reader already perceives the *convenient application* of this psychological theory of the *subconscious* to all supernatural phenomena of mysticism, including ecstasy. According to W. James, they are only "an explosion into the fields of ordinary consciousness of ideas elaborated . . . in subliminal regions of the mind."[2] They must not then be attributed to the action of a being superior to man, but to the unconscious part of man himself, the unexpected outbreak of which into consciousness produces the illusion of an outside inspiration or of divine intervention.

The same idea is thus developed by a very talented psychologist, M. Delacroix, who knew how to deck it in most attractive form. "The internal force which governs the mystic," he writes, "is not his conscious will; this intelligence which orders his life is not his reflective intelligence; his states from that

[1] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 206.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 235.

time are, indeed, the manifestation of a power, foreign and superior to consciousness, the progressive realization within him of a God who takes possession of him, penetrates and transforms him; but this God is only an inward God, this divine is the *θεῖον ἐν ἡμῖν*. . . . These are the subconscious forces which are able to *assume divine form*, in the religious sense of the word, when they unite both creative fruitfulness and moral wealth with conformity to religious tradition. . . ."[1]

Divine ecstasy, then, would be nothing more than the effect of the unexpected meeting of a soul with this inward God which it has created for itself, without suspecting it, in the mysterious and unknown depths of the subconscious.

Criticism.—Such is the brilliant, but very fragile, explanation of all mystical facts by the subconscious forces of the soul. Like the preceding theory—that of natural ecstasy—it is naturalistic, but it adds to this the claim of having discovered its secret mechanism in the very depths of our being.

In order to refute it, then, it would be enough, strictly speaking, to repeat here all our arguments, laying bare the radical insufficiency of all purely natural explanation; but we shall do better by adding to these general arguments a criticism of this new mechanism with which it is proposed to replace the true God of the Christian mystics by a divine ideal of their own fabrication, incapable of playing his true part.

But first of all it may be permitted us to note the resemblance, if not identity, of this new theory with one of the principal theses of modernism condemned by the Encyclical *Pascendi*. For the modernist, in fact, it is in the subconscious that the intimate intercourse of the soul with the divine is brought about, and it is the sudden outbreak into consciousness of this subconscious development which constitutes supernatural revelation and the whole Christian religion with its dogmas, its sacraments, its moral code, its hierarchy, which are only the human expression or symbolic translation, made after the event, of this religious outburst springing from the mysterious depths of the subconscious.

According to the modernist, says the Encyclical, " the need of religion . . . does not belong *of itself* to the domain of consciousness. In principle it lies below . . . in the subconscious, where, it must be added, its roots remain hidden, entirely in-

[1] *Études d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme. Les grands mystiques chrétiens*, p. 62.

accessible to the mind . . . Hence the equivalence between the individual consciousness and revelation." Let us stop this chimera in its progress, as a traveller in contraband without permit is arrested, and ask of it its title to our confidence.

First of all, how do you explain the so-called illusion of our saints, who, in their various mystical states, especially ecstasy, think themselves in intimate relation with an extraneous personality that makes itself manifest to them as the divine Being ? How do you explain the character of *passiveness* and *outwardness* which you yourselves recognize as the distinguishing note of these states ? Your answer is: precisely so, the ideas evolved in the subconscious, by breaking out suddenly into consciousness, appear there *passively* and *involuntarily*—this is true, and we grant it—and, furthermore, that they " spontaneously assume divine appearance," as M. Delacroix affirms —that is, they become personified by assuming the appearance and the role of an outside person with whom the seer is able to confer and enter into communication. Now this latter is false, belied by experience, seeing that the subconscious never suffices of itself alone to create in consciousness the appearance of a *double personality*.

In order to convince yourself of this, take *three classical examples* of the subconscious: *sleep*, *distraction*, and *artistic* or *scientific inspiration*, and find out if they ever produce such an effect.

Has the sleeper on awakening ever the illusion of the doubling of his personality, in the sense of considering that of sleep and the subconscious as foreign to the other ? It is clear that it is not so, and that the awakened ego feels itself in perfect continuity with that which was asleep. A great man, distracted by some high mathematical problem, eats and drinks and walks about without being conscious of these automatic operations. The man and animal in him seem to be unconscious of each other, but they never produce two personalities, a double ego. Finally the artist, the man of genius, suddenly enlightened by a thought deeply pondered over and hatched in the subconscious, far from looking on it as foreign to him, appropriates it without question, regarding it as his personal property, his honour and glory. Did Newton or Pascal, Raphael or Mozart, ever hesitate to sign their names to the most beautiful inspirations of their genius ? When did they think of attributing these to some foreign personality ? It has indeed been stated that a famous sonata by the celebrated composer Tartini was

attributed to the suggestion of the devil, but this legendary anecdote merely gives dramatic expression to the occasionally tragic inspiration of genius, and Tartini himself was not deceived by it.

The subconscious, then, in no way suffices to produce the illusion of an outside personality. For this it would be necessary for it to be complicated by that pathological state known as mental disaggregation or apparent doubling of personality. But here we fall back into the morbid explanations that we desire to avoid, and our great mystics would again become confused with those who are ill, neuropathic, or mad.

Disaggregation of the ego is not to be found either in sleep or distraction or inspiration. There is only a very real distinction of faculties, operating separately, yet in a quite normal manner. Thus in slumber our faculties fall asleep successively, one after the other, and are awakened in the same way in inverse order. In distraction, exclusive attention to one object causes other objects or the other operations of the soul and body to be forgotten. In inspiration one single idea occupies the field of consciousness; but in not one of the three cases does the consciousness become divided into more than one ego or several personalities foreign to one another. This alienation of part of the ego remains an abnormal and pathological state.

This missing link in the explanation of mystical states by the subconscious is so evident that at the Congress of Psychology in 1909 (see Reports of Dessoir, Janet, Prince, and the discussion, pp. 38-105), eminent psychologists proposed to alter the definition of the subconscious and to restrict the use of this word to cases in which " the subconscious psychological facts do not remain dissociated from each other, but are systematized round a secondary ego without fusing with the principal ego," or, in other words, to the case of apparent doubling of personality. Let us for the moment accept the *new definition* and show that this change of key is still not enough to explain the mystical facts.

In cases of doubling, as experienced in our clinics, when state number *two* succeeds state number *one*, the subject has no remembrance of number *two* in number *one*. With the mystics it is just the reverse, for they experience perfect continuity of consciousness and of memory. On coming out of ecstasy St Teresa and all the other ecstatics remember the things seen and heard, analyse them in the greatest detail, with perfect

competence, and, far from thinking that their ego has become doubled, they declare that it is the same before, during, and after the ecstasy. The psychological mechanism, then, is not the same with our Christian mystics as with the sick in our clinics, and the so-called explanation vanishes into nothingness.

But if the subconscious forces are not capable of assuming " the form " of some outside person and of acting his role, all the more are they radically incapable of assuming that " divine form " of which Delacroix speaks, and of acting within us and outside of us " divinely," as our mystical saints declare. In order to be able to do so it would be necessary to endow this subconsciousness with virtues higher than consciousness, higher than human nature, virtues truly divine, which would be gratuitously to endow them with magical virtues never attributed to the most powerful fairies of mythology. Let us enter into detail and give some examples.

First of all, let us examine the most striking expression of mystical phenomena, divine ecstasy itself. We have already shown, from the testimony of history, that among great scholars and artists there has never been veritable natural ecstasy. It has only been possible to show us false natural ecstasies among sick and unbalanced folk, in which the essential element of ecstasy, the supereminent activity of the higher faculties, is completely lacking. We have stated the reason of this: intuition of a transcendent, superhuman object alone is able to overthrow or suspend the sensible life in a man perfectly healthy and master of himself. As Holy Writ tells us, it is impossible to see God without at once dying to the life of the senses. This is, as it were, an exclusive mark of apparitions of the divinity.

But if you suppress one of the two terms, if your God is no more than a creation of your mind, it would be man who overthrew himself by contemplating either himself or the chimerical product of his fancy, which is nonsense, and subverts the very idea of ecstasy, in which the higher being dominates and subjugates the lower in an unfettered wonder. At the same time that man overthrew himself as regards the life of sense, he would raise himself far above himself with respect to the most noble life, intellectual and moral; and so the mind itself would surpass itself, which is unintelligible and absurd, even in the eyes of those who admit the possibility of natural ecstasy.

We shall take the proof of this superelevation of our ecstatic

saints from the avowals of our opponents themselves, or at least those of them who are not entirely blinded by passion. One of them who, in spite of his rationalistic prejudice, has best understood the beautiful mental balance and the superiority of our mystical saints, above all of St Teresa, of whom he has made a most profound study, has not feared to extol the power of their minds, the generosity of their hearts, the fruitful activity of their apostolate. "Their systematic power," he writes, "and their psychological subtlety guarantee to us their intelligence; their active proselytism and the vast expansion of their religious life are witness to their activity and abundance of feeling."[1]

And William James, summing up the lives and social influence of our great mystics, wrote: "The saint is . . . adapted to the highest society conceivable, whether that society ever be concretely possible or not."[2] They were, in fact, "creators" of Christian and superhuman energy, above all of love of God and of souls, of tender-heartedness towards sinners, the poor and the outcast of this world, of severity to themselves and heroic humility, finally of courage and constancy in apostolic work, in spite of most terrible trials and contradictions. Now how will the blind subconscious powers suffice to explain these intellectual and moral marvels, which St Teresa summed up in the single phrase "the transformation of souls"?

If the mechanism of the subconscious is properly understood, no idea is to be found therein which has not come from consciousness, for there are no such things as innate ideas, and all our ideas are evolved by our conscious intelligence from the data of our senses. The sphere of the subconscious is, in reality, only the vast treasure of the memory, not only in the static and inert state, but in the dynamic state in which the anterior data of consciousness and all the rest of our psychological life ponder and automatically combine. Deprived of all intellectual and conscious guidance, these combinations, when no longer guided by acquired impulse, will wander blindly at the hazard of circumstance. Like our subconscious dreams, they more often than not engender the fantastic and absurd; thus Dr. Grasset has endowed their productions with a very expressive name, which has become classical, that of *lower psychism*. And it is this lower psychism which is asked

[1] Delacroix, *Études d'histoire. . . . Les grands mystiques chrétiens, ibid.*

[2] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 375.

to explain that wonderful transformation of souls, of minds and of hearts, admittedly not to be explained by the higher and conscious psychism.

Certainly it is a position which rationalist habit of mind and prejudice alone have thrust on M. Delacroix. In vain has he rejected the epithet of " lower psychism " which contradicts his theory; he will never prove that the unconscious is higher than the conscious, nor, above all, will he ever show any work of genius accomplished by the unconscious alone without the help of the conscious intelligence, to which belongs the chief merit of every discovery, since it has long prepared the unconscious labour, directed it, and gathered its fruit. No doubt, in order to invent, the intelligence makes use of the memory, but it is the intelligence that invents and not the memory. In the same way the subconscious may be an instrument in the hands of the conscious workman, but it is never the real workman, and remains inferior to him in dignity and fruitfulness.

Therefore that which the higher psychism has not been able to explain, the lower will explain still less, and all the magical qualities with which it is adorned are but sounding words, denied by experience, if it is thought that the subconscious in our mystical saints is that which alone works so many marvels.

Among these marvels we need but recall to memory the transcendental lights as to the present, past, and future so often and so freely granted to the ecstatic saints. St Teresa herself witnesses to it more than twenty times, declaring that " everything that I have learnt in prayer, though it may be two years previously, I have seen fulfilled."[1] And the cases she cites in detail are extremely numerous and wholly remarkable.

M. Delacroix himself grants them in perfect good faith; he points out above all the prophetic character of certain of St Teresa's visions, but we do not find anywhere in his work how the blind forces of the subconscious suffice to explain them.

In ending this criticism of the subconscious, we cannot refrain from emphasizing *two avowals*, more or less disguised, made by its warmest advocates, which show what little confidence they themselves have in the complete sufficiency of the subconscious as an explanation of all mystical phenomena.

[1] *Relation to one of her Confessors from the House of Doña Luisa de la Cerda*, 1562.

Here is the *first avowal:* It is the invention of the *transsubliminal.* As the subconscious or subliminal seems to be too impotent, alone, to produce such marvellous effects among our great mystics, several psychologists have thought to complete it by adding to it a kind of lower stage, a still more deep and copious region of the ego, with which the subconscious ego is in *continuity*, just as the normal ego is with the subconscious. This they call the *transsubliminal.*

This substratum or bottom of the human soul being still unexplored, every imaginable wealth may be attributed to it, which will supplement what is lacking in both the subconscious and the conscious in the production of mystical phenomena. We may suppose, for instance, with M. Delacroix, that it is " an intelligence and a thought," even more, that it is " not a momentary intelligence, but an intelligence of wide compass, capable both of directing things and adapting itself to them." Thus the lucubrations of the subconscious would undergo the " logical control of a delicate intelligence and the guidance of a sort of implicit plan." So the subconscious would possess a dynamic and constructive automatism. These automatisms would be in no way scattered and incoordinate, but systematized, progressive, governed by an internal finality, notifying the continuous intervention in life of a being wiser and more powerful than ordinary nature or reflection. In a word, subconsciousness " would be an intelligent will unknown to the mind and superior to the mind," superior even, as has just been stated, to " ordinary nature."

Such is the ingenious explanation—or rather the bold travesty —of Christian supernaturalism. Nature and the supernatural seem to be nothing more than emanations, in the pathetic sense of the word, of a universal principle, a common fundamental essence of all things, whence every degree of the subconscious and the conscious emerges little by little whilst preserving substantial continuity and inherent intercourse between them.

It is useless to undertake here the refutation of this emanatist and evolutionary pantheism; it will be enough for us to place in opposition to it one single fact, the better authenticated for being universal.

If the subconscious is thus under the higher and guiding influence of a " transsubconscious " whence it must emanate, how comes it that this beneficent influence only makes itself felt in the lives of our great mystics and never in ordinary life? Now whenever it becomes possible for us to study

the progress within us of the subconscious, as in our sleep and our everyday dreams, it is found to be odd and incoherent, without logic or synthesis, impassioned and amoral, radically impotent to produce what is rational, still less of creating heroism and sanctity. Why then, impotent everywhere else, does the subconscious—although enlightened and guided by the transsubconscious, as we are told it is, in every man—become, among our great mystics, and among them alone, a force much higher than conscious reason, capable of genius, of heroism, and of constant sanctity during the whole of their lives? Here is a fact, it seems to us, which is enough to belie the existence of this so-called transsubliminal force, which ought, like all the forces of nature, to produce always and everywhere the same effects.

The objection is so insoluble that, in order to escape from it, other psychologists have thought fit to modify their hypothesis and to give it a new form.

Second form of avowal: The subconscious might serve as an instrument for the direct and supernatural action of God; it would serve as the vehicle of outward and transcendent grace. Let us hear William James. "It is logically conceivable," he writes," that *if there be* higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so *might be* our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them. The hubbub of the waking life might close a door which in the dreamy subliminal might remain ajar or open . . . forces transcending the individual might impress him, on condition of his being what we may call a subliminal human specimen."[1]

No doubt the American psychologist only admits this hypothesis as possible, but it is admitted as plausible and likely by Catholic psychologists such as Fr. Maréchal,[2] Fr. Pacheu,[3] Baron Frederic Von Hügel, in his great work on Mysticism in St Catherine of Genoa,[4] and by several other apologists.

Before following them, let us ask ourselves, not whether God is able to act directly on the subconscious in order to reach the conscious faculties—it is clear that he is able to do this—but if it is useful, if there is a reason for acting thus, for God does nothing without reason.

[1] W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 242.
[2] *Le sentiment de présence chez les profanes et les mystiques.*
[3] *L'expérience mystique et la subconscience.*
[4] *The Mystical Element of Religion . . . in St Catherine of Genoa. . . .*

We understand that divine grace takes possession of our unconscious in order to instil into it feelings, enlightenments, tendencies, and a wholly new direction. In this way are explained those deep movements of the heart and of the will which seem to precede all our reflections, those sudden inspirations of the understanding respecting matters concerning which we had never thought; above all, those changes of soul that suddenly overthrow our former tendencies, which are so well named *conversions*.

But, let it be well noted, all these facts belong to the ordinary ways of grace, and not at all to the extraordinary ways of mysticism, characterized, as we have explained, by the infusion of supernatural lights and by the coming into play of the five spiritual senses which give us knowledge of the presence of God within us, either a vision, or touch, or some other direct sensation, conscious, though more or less confused. Here it is to consciousness that God reveals himself, and the subconscious becomes a useless instrument, like a fifth wheel to a carriage.

Here is an example among a thousand. St Teresa, with all the authority of a woman with high gifts, so keen of sight in penetrating the most intimate secrets of her psychology that our adversaries themselves bend before her, thus gives account of her ecstasies. "The soul," she writes, "is represented as being close to God; and there abides a conviction thereof so certain and strong, that it cannot possibly help believing so."[1]

This clear and definite testimony, moreover, is endorsed by all ecstatics. Now, what role is there to be assigned to the subconscious in this conscious vision? Certainly none at all. God makes himself manifest therein directly, not to the subconscious, but to the conscious part of the soul, and to maintain the contrary would be an unintelligible absurdity.

Doubtless the subconscious is able to feel the effects of the rebound of ecstasy, which becomes engraved deep down in the memory, where unconsciously praise and thanksgiving for the blessings of God are long afterwards pondered. . . . But this role is no longer that of the instrument and vehicle of divine action assigned to it by the theory of the unconscious, which is thus found wanting and without meaning.

This failure of a fashionable theory has been thus shown up by Fr. Poulain: "Everything is thus unerringly explained in accordance with their wishes. When a super-normal *fact*

[1] *Life*, ch. xviii.

of psychology presents itself, the ignorant person feels no shadow of perplexity; he attributes it to the little subterranean workshop of the mind, and the thing is done. We can understand that with this very simple mode of procedure, the supernatural can be eliminated without difficulty. Such persons affirm without any proof that all religious sentiment and religious life are merely a development of human activity. St Paul's revelations and those of the Bible prophets and the saints are attributed to eruptions of the subconscious. What a fruitful theory!"[1]

In order to end this study on ecstasy let us *sum up* in few words the divers naturalistic explanations attempted by rationalists. This synthetic glimpse will make their common character and common failure stand out more clearly.

Armed with the fundamental principle of the scientific method: that *unknown facts must be reduced to facts that are known*—a true principle as long as it is restricted to the limits of what is possible or probable, and that it does not exclude on *a priori* grounds, deliberately, all supernatural intervention—the rationalists have endeavoured to reduce divine ecstasy to various other natural phenomena, morbid or non-morbid, but extraordinary.

First they assimilate it to a kind of *madness*, a kind altogether new and belonging only to mystics and ecstatics, for they are mad without being so, in view of the perfect rectitude of their minds and heroic mastery of themselves. Then they have likened it to *catalepsy*. "The ecstatic is cataleptic!" the oracles of medical science have lavishly repeated. Unfortunately the essential element of ecstasy, the superactivity of the higher faculties, understanding and love, is replaced in catalepsy by intellectual nothingness, and the accidental or physiological element of ecstasy is notably different. The so-called catalepsy of our ecstatic saints, then, must be a new kind met with only in them.

Then it has been compared to *hysteria*. But hysteria, as is admitted by all medical authorities, is a neurosis which strikes at both the physical and the moral character of the patient, and is characterized above all by an unbalanced state of mind, and mental degeneracy, whereas our ecstatic saints furnish us with the finest types of perfect mental equilibrium. "St Teresa," declares one of our opponents, "is entirely distinguished

[1] A. Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer*, ch. xxxi.

from the ordinary type of hysterical subject by the vigorous stamp of her mind, the patient energy of her will, and so on." Her hysteria, then, must be essentially different from the commonly known varieties. Thus here again is a new category which they have had to invent in order to find a place for our ecstatic saints !

Then they have attempted to associate them with artificial somnambulism or *hypnosis*. But every hypnotized subject infers a hypnotizer, and the latter is lacking in the ecstasy of St Teresa as of all our other saints. Must we then create a special category of hypnosis expressly for them ? This would be the more necessary in that ecstasy differs from hypnosis in other essential characters, as we have shown, notably in its causes, its nature, and its effects.

No assimilation with any other *neurosis* would have any greater chance of success, for a malady always results in a weakening and ruin of health, whereas ecstasy, as St Teresa bears witness, never did her any harm, but, on the contrary, often relieved her in her illnesses, and occasionally fortified her. Must we then produce the new concept of an illness which results in benefit to the body ?

Beaten on the pathological ground, the rationalists have been forced to look elsewhere, among phenomena which, though extraordinary, are healthy and in no way morbid. Here they hoped to be able to assimilate divine ecstasy to a purely *natural* ecstasy, and they might certainly have triumphed if they had been able to show us, in the course of the ages, numerous cases of natural non-morbid ecstasy among philosophers, scholars, artists, and contemplatives, of healthy mind and filled with physical and mental vigour. Now they have not been able to bring forward a single really authentic case of true ecstasy with alienation of the senses and muscular rigidity. Historically this phenomenon is non-existent, and, from the point of view of the deniers of the supernatural, the mystical saints would be the sole types known, which is unlikely.

Finally, they have attempted a last assimilation with *subconscious automatism*. The subconscious forces " might assume divine form " by suddenly springing into consciousness. But in order to assume " divine form," or even simply the form of any foreign personality, a real doubling of the consciousness or of the ego would be necessary, and this we never find with the ecstatics, who, before, during, and after the ecstasy, have

a sense of the continuity of the same ego and keep the remembrance of it. Yet another new category of subconscious automatism that has to be imagined.

But in this case it is not to the known that we may boast of reducing the unknown—according to the scientific method—since in fact it is reduced to a new unknown.

All the known scientific categories of madness, catalepsy, hysteria, hypnosis, subconscious automatism, decline to welcome among themselves the prodigious phenomenon of ecstasy; and they cannot be forced to do so without breaking their barriers. Is not this a proof that all attempts to assimilate divine ecstasy to ordinary phenomena are vain; the tangible proof that here the limits of nature and the concepts of science are surpassed, the supernatural attained, and that "the finger of God is here"?

The method of the rationalists is entirely opposed to our own. After having, with M. Delacroix, admitted the postulate: "we believe that the most lofty states of mysticism in no way exceed the powers of nature,"[1] they conclude: therefore they must willy-nilly enter into our scientific compass! . . . "Instead of being historical," exclaims a learned university man, "instead of giving an impartial account of what the mystics think, of what they have experienced or think they have experienced, the psychology of mysticism becomes substituted for the mystics; it analyses, claims to modify the interior states to which it testifies, to place them in such and such of its compartments. It is shortened, it is superficial, exposed by the prejudices of its method to distort, nay, to depreciate what it claims to explain. . . ."[2] The reader will judge on which side the true scientific method is to be found.

[1] A. Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer*, pref., p. xix.

[2] Darlu, *Bulletin de la Société franç. de philosophie*, January, 1906, p 41.

CHAPTER III

MARVELLOUS COMPLEMENTS OF DIVINE ECSTASY

UNDER this title we bring together all the accessory phenomena of divine ecstasy, which are equally marvellous, and may be reduced to *six main heads:* (1) Stigmatization; (2) levitation; (3) luminous effluvia; (4) odoriferous effluvia; (5) mystical abstinence, or inedia; (6) finally, the miraculous power of the saints over nature. The mere enumeration of these is enough to show how interesting this study is, and also its apologetic importance. It may be said that the attacks of incredulous scholars are centred, by preference, on these six marvels, which have blunted or broken all their most piercing arrows.

§ 1

Stigmatization

Not all ecstatic saints have had the sacred stigmata; far from it, only about sixty have been raised by the Church to her altars. But all true stigmatics have been ecstatics and have received their glorious wounds in the rapture of ecstasy. Thus, we are justified in regarding stigmatization as a marvellous complement of divine ecstasy: so much so that any stigmatization not produced and developed in ecstatic union would not be the type proposed for our veneration by the Church; it would only be a suspect, or, more correctly, a *false stigmatization.*

There might be, and there have as a matter of fact been, false stigmata. That is why in processes of canonization —as Benedict XIV expressly teaches—it is not stigmatization that proves sanctity. But sanctity once proved by the practice of heroic virtue and participation in the mystical gifts of God, especially in divine ecstasy, and once admitted, the ecclesiastical tribunals then agree to proceed to an examination of the facts of stigmatization. Till then these would be formally non-suited.

The first question, then, that is suggested by our study is that of the *idea* of divine stigmatization. Afterwards we shall deal with its possible *imitations*.

I. *The idea of divine stigmatization*

Such a notion as this certainly cannot be reached *a priori*, but is easily unfolded by the *study of the facts;* a new proof of the principle laid down by the Venerable Luis de Ponte: mysticism cannot be other than an *experimental science*.

Now on September 17, 1222, for the first time in the history of the Christian world, on the heights of Mount Alverno, in Tuscany, in a sublime ecstasy, the venerable patriarch of Assisi, St Francis, had a vision of a seraph presenting to him a picture of Jesus Christ crucified, and by means of luminous and blood-red rays, imprinting the sacred wounds in his two hands, his two feet, and his side. These were not merely a figure and symbol, but a reality: true wounds from which there flowed streams of the purest red blood.

Although out of humility he desired to keep them hidden during his lifetime, they were noticed by his companions and many visitors, such as Pope Alexander IV, at that time Cardinal; then, after the Saint's death, which took place on October 4, 1226, the wonder became public. An enormous crowd came to contemplate and venerate the sacred stigmata. It was specially noticed that those of the hands and feet were represented by nails, having round, dark heads, nails made of flesh and passing through the thickness of the limb so as to be seen on the other side with the point bent back. On pressing the head of the nail the point protruded, as though it were in one piece. St Clare, who was present at this wonderful sight, tried in vain to draw out one of these nails. During four years after St Francis had received them, the wounds remained fresh and red, as on the first day, without any sign of cicatrization or of putrefaction.

As miracles round the tomb of the holy patriarch multiplied, Gregory IX canonized him in 1228. On April 5, 1238, he issued a letter to the whole of Christendom certifying once more the miracle of the stigmata, and seventy-five years later Benedict XI instituted the feast of the Stigmatization of St Francis.

Since these memorable dates other analogous facts have astonished the Church by their no less wonderful variety. To

the five wounds of St Francis there have often been added the crown of thorns, occasionally the shoulder wound and the stigmata of the scourging, sometimes also wounds in the heart which ought to have been mortal; the wounded heart of St Teresa, which is still preserved incorrupt at the monastery of Alba in Spain, is one of the most remarkable examples of them. In certain hearts also, autopsy has revealed epigraphic inscriptions of letters or drawings, and plastic formations imitating the instruments of the Passion. Although the last-named are very rare, they are none the less authentic, and descriptions and drawings of them may be seen in Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre's great work *La Stigmatisation*.[1]

These facts, although much abridged, are enough to enable us to form a precise idea and a *definition* of divine stigmatization, as the Church understands it and proposes it for the veneration of the faithful.

It consists of wounds that appear spontaneously—that is, without being caused by external injuries, and restricted to the members wounded in the Passion of the Saviour, especially the feet, the hands, and the side. From these wounds flows pure blood, entirely free from the sero-purulent mixture found in infected wounds. They bleed periodically on certain days of the week, such as Friday, or on feast days specially connected with Christian piety. These wounds are not healed by the use of those remedies or dressings which cure ordinary wounds, and, although permanent, do not become corrupt or give out any unpleasant odour.[2] These are facts verified by innumerable evidences and sanctioned by the high authority of the Church; and such is the fundamental idea that flows from them.

[1] Vol. ii, pp. 47 *ff*.

[2] "Examined from the medical standpoint, the stigmata have been recognized as formed of thin crusts of coagulated blood lying on the surface of a wound, from which exudes blood with a kind of serum, which is the ordinary appearance of a wound exposed to the air, yet without suppuration. Such are the stigmata of the limbs. In the head they are less apparent, and show themselves under the form of small chafings of the epidermis arranged irregularly on the forehead, through which blood is seen to issue in little drops at the time of hæmorrhage. That of the side, in crescent form, has the appearance of a wound covered with caked blood, but when examined with a lens it appears to be made up only of simple chafings of the epidermis covered with layers of concreted blood" (Dr. Ferrand, *La Stigmatisation*).

Without staking its infallibility on a question which does not come within the scope either of revealed faith or of morals, the Church clothes with her veneration all cases of stigmatization which clearly assume the above characteristics and proclaims them to be divine stigmata, whilst those that are lacking in these essential characteristics are, in her eyes, only false stigmata.

Among these *false stigmata* some are counterfeits due to the *action of the devil*, who, in all ages, has shown himself to be " the ape of God;" these are always unmasked by their moral malice, as are false ecstasies and false miracles. Others may arise from *natural causes*, which must be investigated, but which are always limited and powerless to produce anything comparable to divine stigmata, as we propose to show fully. There are, then, as theology never ceases to proclaim, true and false stigmata, and it is owing to their confusion—wilful or involuntary, the fruit of malice or of ignorance—that our adversaries have ever sought to throw discredit on true stigmata: as though false money were able to reduce the value of pure gold !

Scholars of the Reformation period, such as Peter Pomponazzi, Cornelius Agrippa, Giordano Bruno, and many others, endeavoured to confuse them, maintaining that they were all, without distinction, the product of an *exalté* imagination. Thus St Francis must have stigmatized himself, without willing it or knowing it, but only by thinking about it very deeply. The same explanation, revised and strengthened by certain discoveries, has been renewed in our days by all free-thinkers, who are ever vying with one another in proclaiming that stigmata are but the natural effect of vivid imagination. It is then for us to see whether this explanation is admissible, either for false stigmata or for divine.[1]

II. *Can the imagination produce false stigmata?*

It is rare to find a more ambiguous or badly put question than this. We spare its form, however, because it enables us,

[1] Görres forgot this essential distinction: " The soul, the principle of life, cannot receive any imprint without this being reproduced in the body which it animates, for it is eminently plastic. . . . Every modification that takes place in it induces a similar change in the body. . . . It is thus that the phenomenon of stigmatization is brought about " (*La mystique*, vol. ii, p. 201). If admitted without reserve, this explanation ends in rationalism.

by unmasking its looseness and defects, to show in what sense alone it would be acceptable and how it should be understood.

First of all, let us make clear the *role of the imagination.* By itself and *directly* this faculty can set nothing in motion. The theory of idea-forces or of image-forces of M. Fouillée, however specious, has had to be amended in the presence of a more exact psychological analysis.

It is emotion which sets in motion—as the etymology of the word clearly shows—because it is already a movement of feeling or appetite. The image alone is able to arouse only some emotion agreeable or disagreeable; the latter provokes desire or fear, which in turn engender organic movements. Some are brought about by the nerves in the motor organs or the muscles of the limbs, the eyes, and so on; others in the organs of the nutritive life, especially the heart and its vessels, by means of the vaso-motor nerves. The now quickened, now lessened innervation of the heart and of the muscular walls of the small vessels, where nourishment and the vegetative life are distributed with the blood to all the organs of the body, is the mysterious instrument of this organic life. Imagination has never more than an indirect influence on all this.

Furthermore, whereas all the motions of the sensible life or life of relation may be conscious, almost all the movements of the nutritive life take place unconsciously. Digestion, the circulation of the blood, the perpetual formation and reformation of all the tissues or divisions of cells which go to make up each organ, being perpetually unconscious, their mechanism becomes still more obscure and mysterious.

But who is there who would deny the influence of the moral faculties on the physical, of the sensible life on the vegetative, of the emotions on health and sickness, merely because almost nothing is understood of their mechanism? Do we understand any better the action of light, of electricity, of magnetism? Do we understand the evolution of the egg or the formation or deformation of the smallest organ?

All that we are able to suspect is that the action of the moral on the physical is produced by means of numerous intermediaries, especially by the vaso-motor innervation of which we have just spoken, and that the imagination, in the strict sense, must possess a less important role there than we have been led to think, and this for two reasons.

The *first* is that the imagination is not necessarily a prime mover, for occasionally it is possible to reach the intermediate

mechanism without it. Thus, for example, a cut of the whip produces an emotion directly, and much better than a mere image.

The *second* reason is that although the imagination might now and then be a first cause, its efficacy is dependent on so many intermediate causes, and on so many conditions required for the action of each of them, that really the part of imagination becomes very reduced, and sometimes even in the production of grave organic trouble is only a simple occasional cause.

Among the *conditions required* in order that the imagination may thus be able to produce it, the principal one is an abnormal—nay, a pathological—state in the subject, for it is very evident that in the normal state nothing abnormal will be produced. For example, it is not normal for anyone, by thinking very deeply about it, to be able to have a sweat of blood, or to produce ecchymosis in the feet or hands. Among the many abnormal or pathological conditions that are necessary for the moral faculties to have a particular effect on the body, there are three which should be specially brought forward.

The *first* are certain accidental nervous states such as those of *pregnancy*. The imagination and the vivid emotions of mothers, especially the *longings*, the suggested cause of birth-marks, are able to produce most extraordinary plastic deformations of the fœtus in the womb. We know that the patriarch Jacob obtained lambs spotted with black and white by placing black and white rods before the eyes of the ewes at the drinking places. Experiments of this kind have been renewed in our own time with much greater success in that the colours chosen have produced a much more striking contrast.[1]

The writer himself once witnessed a fact which vividly impressed his childhood. When out hunting he stopped to have breakfast at a farm. Wanting some radishes, one of the party went to fetch them in the garden, and taking a short cut back he passed through the stable near a cow in calf, which, allured by the bunch of radishes, began to devour them. To its annoyance these were quickly drawn away. Now there was born, some weeks after, a calf bearing on its shoulder a plastic form resembling a bundle of radishes. Who would dare to maintain that the imagination or the longing of the animal had

[1] See *Bulletin de la Société nationale d'agriculture*, September 7 and 28, 1872.

no part in this ? No doubt these monstrosities are of blastodermic origin, and are due to troubles in the development of the embryo, as is shown in teratology, but these troubles themselves come from troubles brought about by images and emotions in the vaso-motor innervation.

A *second* condition is certain *morbid predispositions*, in which the role exercised by the nerves is very important. Here are some examples, for it would be difficult to cite them all.

(*a*) *Dermatography.*—Dr. Mesnet has defined this by its effect: " It is the reproduction in relief, protruding and tinted, of emblems, figures, or words that the operator has thought fit to draw very lightly on the skin." The least physical excitation on the skin of a dermatographic subject—such, for instance, as the tracing of letters or figures there with a blunt style—is enough to produce, after a certain time, protruding eruptions or œdematous projections, surrounded with redness, comparable to the well-known effects of nettles. Dermatography is therefore sometimes known as *artificial nettle-rash.*

This phenomenon undoubtedly depends, in the first place, on an exceptional sensitiveness of the skin in neuropathic or arthritic subjects, but it would be a regrettable exaggeration to add that it has no counter-effect on the general sensibility, the memory, the imagination, the emotions; or that these faculties do not react by intensifying, little by little, the first phenomenon.

The sensible mechanism being the same in animals, there is no reason to be surprised if, for example, a light touch of the whip, given to certain pure-blood horses, is able to produce ecchymoses or dermatographic eruptions. Let it be noted that the phenomenon may reach a more intense degree, and that blood may ooze through the printed marks from every pore of the skin.

(*b*) *Hemophilia* and *hematidrosis* are morbid, and occasionally hereditary, predispositions to hemorrhage and sweat of blood. The blood-sweat of hematidrosis, however, does not contain red globules. Its coloration comes from the presence of certain ill-defined bacilli. As it coincides with the lesion of the sudoriparous glands, it ought rather to be looked upon as one of those variously coloured sweats, whose infinitely variable shades still astonish medical science. In order to distinguish true sweat of blood, recourse must always be had to the microscope, to discover the constitutive globules of blood.

A *third* factor in the abnormal influence of the moral faculties on the physical—that which appears to be most

powerful and most strange—is the state of half-sleep or of somnambulism and *hypnosis*. Sleep, from the highest antiquity, has been looked upon by thinkers and scholars as a mysterious enigma, to such an extent as to be the object of superstitious practices. The Fathers of the Church, St Augustine and St Gregory, and the greatest doctors of the Middle Ages, like St Thomas, whilst avoiding excess or superstition, have not refrained from wondering at this singular state of the soul, which begins by freeing itself from sense, and acquires unusual properties so far as to "foretell things to come." They also often refer to that mysterious state of the soul, *quando abstrahitur a sensibus*, which is found in artificial sleep.

Neither their curious studies nor those of our contemporaries seem so far to have succeeded in unravelling the enigma. Nevertheless, St Thomas threw a ray of light on the subject when he proclaimed that when the activity of the soul is diminished at one point it is increased at another. If there is excess, the balance is destroyed, the ordered position of the faculties is overturned, and the most strange abnormal effects may result. For instance, when the sensible life is diminished or effaced, the organic life is increased and doubled in intensity. Arrived at a high degree of excitation, it becomes subject to the smallest influences of sensible images and emotions, whether spontaneous or suggested. Thence the extraordinary subsequent rebound of the moral on the physical, of the sensible life on the organic, through vaso-motor innervation. A sensation which, in the normal state, would pass unperceived, then disturbs and upsets the circulation of the blood, automatically affects nutrition and the formation of living tissues, producing in them anomalies and even monstrosities.

In what measure would it be able to produce anomalies which might be more or less clumsy imitations of stigmatization? It is this that we have to examine, not *a priori*, but by the attentive study of facts. As stigmata may be evolved gradually, by passing through *divers phases*, simple congestion or redness of the skin, ecchymosis, sweat of blood, stigmatic wounds, dermatography, and plastic formations, we shall, in our inquiry, also follow this progressive method.

1. *Simple congestion* or *redness of the skin*.—This phenomenon, in spite of its apparent triviality, calls for our attention because it is the remote preparation and, as it were, the starting-point of hemorrhage and stigmata. It is produced even in the

normal state in quite healthy temperaments. As soon as a man becomes the prey of a somewhat vivid emotion, his forehead reddens, his face becomes bloodshot. If the emotion, instead of being progressive, is sudden, his blood " boils," as is commonly said. The influx is so great that it causes turgescence of the tissues; it might be thought that it was about to come out through the skin. It never does so, however, in the normal state unless there be a wound.

This providential law of the conservation of the blood and of life has been demonstrated by some excellent experiments on animals by Professor Bouchard. He has proved that whereas the normal maximum tension is only 19 centimetres, in order to produce rupture of the capillaries of the skin, the heart that drives the blood to the vessels would need a pressure of 78 centimetres. If the imagination in emotion shows such enormous power here even in the normal state, of what must it not be capable in abnormal states with a tendency to hemorrhage ? It may also be artificially assisted by means of pins, knives, or other instruments, but this would only be a feigned stigmatization.

2. Persistent congestion of the skin, produced by some violent emotion, occasionally also induces *ecchymosis*. This is already a hemorrhage; the capillary vessels of the skin or subcutaneous cellular tissue have been torn by the pressure, the blood flows, but it is arrested in the meshes of the skin. The hemorrhage thus remains internal, and the purple or livid coloration of the injured part sufficiently indicates an extravasation of blood in the cellular tissue.

Examples of ecchymosis, due to vivid emotions, are numerous in the annals of medicine. Among those that have been drawn from them by Fr. Coconnier in his work on *Hypnotisme franc*, we choose four that have found favour with its most ardent critics, a short summary of which will suffice to give the reader an idea of these curious phenomena.

The first is that of a mother who, suddenly seeing her child's foot on the point of being crushed by an iron gate, was taken with a pain in the foot. Redness followed, then swelling of the ankle, which forced her to remain in bed for some days. The second case is that of a child on the point of having its neck cut by the fall of a chimney draw-plate. At the sight of this danger the mother was so seized with fright that a red and protruding circle was formed round her neck, which lasted for several hours.

The third is the story of a servant who, seeing her mistress bled by a surgeon, felt something like the prick of a lancet in her arm, where presently ecchymosis appeared. Lastly, the case of a man who in a dream imagined that a spectre seized his feet. Terrified by the vision he awoke and observed in one of his feet redness, swelling, and soon afterwards suppuration.

All these facts are chosen apart from hypnosis, but analogous facts would be found—perhaps still more easily—in hypnotic sleep. We know that hypnotism is able to produce by suggestion, on a suitable subject, a multitude of pathological accidents which it is not necessary to enumerate in this place, but among which cases of ecchymosis are certainly to be found.

M. Focachon, a chemist of Nancy, in 1885, in the presence of Drs. Beaunis, Bernheim, and Liégeois, was, we believe, the first to produce vesications on the skin of a somnambulist by way of suggestion; but the fact is now well established, and it suffices for the hypnotizer to apply to his subject something resembling a blistering agent, but which is in reality only a piece of blotting-paper, in order to obtain slight effects of vesication.

The objection our readers may see against all these examples is that they do not so far show any exudation of blood or hemorrhage, and that consequently these cases are not at all comparable to stigmata. No doubt, as we readily admit, they are not a sufficient imitation of stigmata, but they are *preparatory* phenomena to bleeding stigmata, and from this point of view very instructive. We see in them the beginnings of hemorrhage; they show us the blood already escaped from the capillary vessels and ready to come outside the skin. Thus they set us on our way and prepare our minds to understand the possibility of an outward flow of blood or a complete hemorrhage. It remains for us to find out whether, under emotional or nervous influences, direct or indirect, this possibility is occasionally realized. This is our third inquiry.

3. Are *sweat of blood* and emotional *hemorrhage* certain facts? They are undoubtedly rare; the more complicated a combination the more rare it is. Now the physiological mechanism of whose secrets we have just had a glimpse is certainly very complicated, since a concurrence of more and more numerous conditions is required as we rise from simple redness of skin or congestion to ecchymosis, and from the latter to hemorrhage. But the rarity of a fact has never been a

scientific reason for its denial. Besides, is it absolutely so rare ?

We are able to go back as far as Aristotle, who, in his treatise *Concerning Animals*, speaks of sweat of blood; and we know with what scrupulous care Aristotle avoids legends or only refers to them with strict reserve. Other examples also might be found among ancient writers, notably in Hippocrates and the Greek physicians. For the sake of brevity let us deal with modern history, where the facts appear to us to be more strictly controlled.

Dom Calmet, in a famous memoir which Benedict XIV quotes with praise, has made known a certain number of observations of sweat of blood and emotional hemorrhage, gathered at his request in the scientific archives of his time by Alliot de Mussey, doctor-regent of the Faculty of Paris. These facts possess all desirable authenticity, and are expounded in the minutest detail, into which we cannot enter, for it would require a volume to itself. Moreover, Benedict XIV —in agreement with Suarez, Cajetan, Maldonatus, Dom Calmet, and many other theologians—thought that the sweat of blood of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemani may have been natural.

Another authoritative memoir published in 1859, in the *Gazette hebdomadaire de médecine et de chirurgie*, was written by Dr. J. Parrot, in accordance with his own observations and those of physicians of the highest merit. A reproduction, both abridged and completed, by Drs. Arthus and Chanson, may be seen in the *Revue Thomiste* of January, 1899. Now an attentive perusal of these works is enough to enable us to conclude that emotional sweat of blood is an indisputable fact. Similar facts obtained by suggestion in hypnosis are an exaggeration of them, so much the more striking in that the images or emotions provoking them are suggested from without by the influence of a foreign personality on a feeble and unbalanced subject who accepts them passively.

Nevertheless there is to be found a learned Catholic scholar who looks on the facts of Dom Calmet and Dr. Parrot as " pretty stories," insufficiently verified; who also maintains that all the others, obtained by our contemporaries in hypnosis, which it is certainly impossible to deny, are truly diabolical.[1]

[1] Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre, professor at the School of Medicine of Clermont: *La stigmatisation* (1894). *L'hypnotisme et la stigmatisation* (Bloud, 1899). Articles in the *Univers*, January 5 and 6, 1876; in *Le Monde*, February 18, 1895; in the *Univers*, August 30, September 2 and 7, and December 16, 1895; June 6, 8, 9, 1898.

But his thesis has been declared to be very daring, and even imprudent, in the almost unanimous opinion of the Catholic doctors of the Society of St Luke, St Cosmas, and St Damian, and its venerable president, Dr. Ferrand, of the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris, member of the *Académie de Médecine*, made himself the mouthpiece of their protests, under the pseudonym of "Spectator," in a series of articles in *Le Monde*.[1] Shortly afterwards, another work of the Dominican and Thomist school, *l'Hypnotisme franc*, by Fr. Coconnier, maintaining the same views as Dr. Ferrand, caused once more lively controversies.

To-day calm seems to have been restored by an almost complete agreement on the thesis that the imagination, understood in its wide sense, has the power of causing, beneath the stress of a violent emotion or by means of suggestion, sweat of blood, at least among neuropathic and unbalanced hysterical subjects; and that it is not necessary to have recourse to the idea of intervention of the devil, although hypnotism may quite *easily* be diabolical.[2]

4. *Stigmatic wounds* are something more than sweat of blood and are necessary for true and complete stigmatization. It is easy to understand the difference. Before, during, and after the sweat of blood, the skin is perfectly entire. The blood does not flow as a result of broken epidermic continuity, as in the case of some inflicted wound such as a cut. It is through the microscopic orifices of the skin, those of the sebaceous or sudoriparous glands, that the bloody liquid flows. These natural channels may even become sufficiently dilated to allow of remarkable rapidity and abundance of hemorrhage. Here are facts that cannot be contested:

"It is impossible," wrote Parrot, "after the blood has been cleansed away, to distinguish the orifices through which it has come; the skin is not at all tumefied."[3]

And Magnus Hüss: "The blood which filters round the

[1] *Le Monde*, December 24, 1894; January 7, 14, 15; February 15, 18, 25; March 6, 11; October 21, 1895; January 6, 1896. *Cf.* article by Drs. Arthus and Chanson, *Revue Thomiste*, January 15, 1899. Dr. Goix, *Revue du monde invisible*, July 15, 1898. Dr. Surbled, *Rev. des q. scientif.*, July, 1898.

[2] "The fact of dripping of blood, even spontaneous, through the normal orifices of healthy skin? Though very rare it cannot be disputed" (Dr. Van der Elst, *Les stigmatisations* in *Revue pratiq. d'Apologétique*, December 15, 1911, p. 428).

[3] Parrot, *Gazette hebdom.*, 1859, p. 646.

roots of the hair forms round each hair a red spot, then a drop which is soon augmented by a second drop which follows it closely. . . . When the bleeding surface is examined with a lens no traces of excoriation of the skin are to be observed, but the blood is seen clearly to filter round the hair. If the hair be pulled out no change is noticed in its root."[1] On the contrary, a case of hemorrhage, after breaking the tegument either spontaneously or by suggestion, is absolutely new and unknown in medicine. It would seem that here the power of nature is arrested.

The lovable St Francis de Sales, moreover, after having granted that " the soul, as the power and mistress of the body, making use of its power in this capacity, imprinted the pain of the wounds with which it was wounded in the places corresponding to those in which its lover had endured them . . . love then caused the interior torments of this great lover, St Francis of Assisi, to pass to the outside . . ." also adds this correction: " But to make *openings in the flesh* from the outside *could not certainly be done* by the love that was within. That is why the fiery seraph, coming to its assistance, darted forth rays of brightness so penetrating that it really produced the wounds."[2]

This common-sense argument—although very inadequate in medicine—would appear to be supported by experience, which so far has not been able to cite even a single case of internal or external injury that it has been possible to impute to suggestion in a man healthy in body—that is, free from any pathological state either local or general. Our opponents themselves have avowed this, and content themselves, like Dr. Terrien at the Geneva Congress, with adding: " Although such facts have never been verified I see no reason why they should not exist."[3]

This was not the opinion of the famous Virchow, who, in connection with the stigmatic wounds of Louise Lateau, exclaimed: " It is either a fraud or a miracle!"[4] And Dr. Imbert saw the reason of it in the great " law of blood " which providentially governs the conservation of the blood and of life. " The man in full health," he wrote, " does

[1] Hüss, *Arch. gen. de médecine*, 1857, p. 165 (quoted by Dr. Van der Elst, *ibid.*).

[2] St Francis de Sales, *Love of God*, bk. vi, ch. xv.

[3] *Bulletin medical*, 2nd half-year, 1907, p. 780.

[4] See Dr. Lefebvre, *Étude médicale sur Louise Lateau*, la stigmatisée du Bois d'Haine, 1873.

not lose his blood through any channel; it is the same with women, excepting as regards the menstrual hemorrhage. . . . Not only, physiologically speaking, does man not lose blood, but it is impossible for him to lose it; as was proved from Professor Bouchard's excellent experiments on animals."[1] Certainly, we reply, this loss of blood would be an anomaly, but is it absolutely impossible, whether with hypnotized subjects, or even, outside hypnotism, with a man who, though healthy, is accidentally troubled by some violent emotion ?

Here opinion is divided, even among Catholic physicians. Dr. Ferrand retains a prudent reserve. " If the nervous system," he writes, " is capable of producing so many alterations in the tissues and on their surface, we can see with what reserve the statement that it would be impossible to produce stigmata should be made."[2]

But this reserve seemed " exaggerated " to Dr. Van der Elst. He, however, admitted that the nervous system governing the nutrition of the tissues is able, under the influence of the emotions or suggestion, to hasten or suspend the changes which constitute the nutrition and the conditions of life of these tissues. Whence the possibility, which he grants Dr. Ferrand, of certain trophic troubles causing lesion of these same tissues through atrophy, degeneration, ulceration, gangrene, and so on. But these lesions would be distinguished from true stigmata by their progress or evolution. Thus, for instance, gangrene, unless dressed and cared for, becomes fatally septic and putrid, which never happens with stigmata, which are incorruptible. Gangrene can be healed and the injured parts rebuilt; stigmata are indifferent to every remedy, and when they disappear spontaneously, as in the case of Louise Lateau, they leave no slough, and so forth.[3]

So that the two opinions, apparently so opposed here, become closely united. If lesions and stigmatic wounds are perhaps not naturally impossible, their course at least is illogical and contrary to recognized evolution; which again distinguishes them essentially from true stigmata, according to the very important principle laid down by St Thomas, that every phenomenon, natural *in itself*, can be supernatural in its *mode* of production or evolution, and this is sufficient for it to be a miracle.

[1] Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre, *L'hypnotisme et la stigmatisation*, p. 8.
[2] Dr. Ferrand, *Revue du monde invisible*, August, 1902.
[3] Dr. Van der Elst, *ibid.*, p. 438.

Let us pass on to the accidental phenomena of stigmata, which are scarcely less marvellous.

5. *The plastic and dermatographic formations* which, without being essential to stigmata, so often accompany them, are certainly under the more or less direct influence of sensibility, of the emotions and also of images, either conscious or subconscious. We have given striking examples of this among women with child, and who would dare maintain that the nervous state of such women is the only nervous state capable of producing such examples? The psychical mechanism of it is undoubtedly most mysterious, nor do we claim to have discovered it. We might, however, perhaps be allowed to make this supposition: just as the instinct of birds in the building of their nests or of spiders in the spinning of their webs in the air is guided by a more or less conscious image, so the embryonic evolution of the egg, or the formation of the organs, is guided by some unconscious image. But an image that is conscious in its origin might become unconscious and be united with the innate images of instinct in order to modify their course and produce in them anomalies such as the plastic and dermatographic formations of which we are speaking, so that it is the psychic that rules all life, even that of the unconscious.

Whatever may be said of this explanation, we venture to think that the influence of the moral over the physical is superabundantly shown in the five phenomena which we have just analysed: simple congestion of the skin, ecchymosis, sweat of blood, stigmatic wounds, and plastic and dermatographic formations. And as these five phenomena are the preparation, or the manifestation, or the complement of natural stigmata, it is impossible to deny that moral influence has at least some part in these marvellous facts.[1]

[1] The astonishing influence of the moral over the physical has been often and strongly brought forward by St Thomas. It may be said that he attributes to the imagination or to the fixed idea the power of provoking many maladies, even to frightful and mortal wounds, such as *leprosy*. Since the discovery of the leprosy bacillus by Dr. Hausen, perhaps this example is not very well chosen, for the imagination cannot create bacilli. Nevertheless, might it not produce or favour the necessary environment for their growth? However this may be, the thought of the holy doctor is none the less enlightening. According to him this influence is enormous, and is exercised by means of a mechanism almost similar to our own: vivid images, emotions, heart troubles, and *animal spirits* or vaso-motor innervation. *Ex imaginatione consequenter natae sunt consequi animae passiones, secundum quas movetur cor; et sic per commotionem spirituum*

And by *moral* we here understand, as will be seen, all the faculties of the sensible life: attention, imagination, emotion, divers sensations, desires or appetites, motive power, vaso-motor innervation . . . whatever be the part imputable to each one and its variable role in each kind of case. So that the question asked at the beginning: *Can the imagination produce false stigmata?* taken literally, after this, seems too indefinite. It errs by *taking the part for the whole*, by confusing the very different modes of direct and indirect causality, and ought to be understood in its widest sense, if it be desired finally to avoid ambiguities and verbal disputes in which there is no more mutual comprehension.

Let us hasten to deal with our second question, which is still more important.

III. *Can the imagination produce true stigmata?*

Congestions of the skin, light ecchymoses, a few drops of blood discharged from most diverse parts of the body without choice of place or day, such is the meagre return of false stigmatization. We might think that an invisible hand had fixed its limit, exclaiming: "Thou shalt go no farther!" Nor is it only a difference of degree or of quantity which distinguishes true stigmatization from false, but a difference of nature or species, as we are about to show.

We would remark, first of all, that divine stigmata do not only consist in the five wounds. This is the least important part of the supernatural phenomenon; it might be called its body; but its soul is something else. It is divine ecstasy that is the *soul of the stigmatization* of the saints. It is ecstasy that brings them forth, for never in the annals of the Church have they been seen to spring up or develop in any other sphere. It is also divine ecstasy which bestows on stigmatization its high moral importance and value for sanctity. If we

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totum corpus alteratur (III, q. xiii, a. 3, ad 3). *Corpus autem transmutatur . . . praecipue per aliquam imaginationem fixam, ex qua corpus calefacit per concupiscentiam vel iram, aut etiam immutatur ad febrem vel "lepram"* (Quaest. Disp., *De Potent.*, vi, a. 9). Elsewhere he observes that a vivid emotion may result in health or sickness without the action of material agents of a nature to produce this sickness or health: *Sequitur aliquando immutatio in corpore ad sanitatem vel aegritudinem, absque actione principiorum corporeorum quae sunt nata in corpore aegritudinem vel sanitatem causare* (*Contr. Gent.*, III, c. xcix).

uncover in respect and veneration, if we fall on our knees before the stigmata of the holy patriarch of Assisi or the pierced heart of St Teresa, it is because they are not ordinary wounds, but wounds received in the sacred rapture of ecstasy, wounds of divine love.

But for this, let us repeat, the stigmata are only a body without a soul, unformed matter lacking in moral beauty, a pathological case inspiring pity, like all human miseries, but in no wise a lofty lesson of heroic love, commanding respect and veneration. Now this supernatural soul is certainly a gift of God, which no human power nor any natural force can produce, and its absence is fully enough to unmask false stigmatization, by placing the divine at an incomparable height of moral beauty.

But there is still more. In the same way that the human soul in forming an embryo shapes the physico-chemical forces of nature in accordance with an ideal human type specifically distinct from all other animal types, so what we have called the supernatural soul of stigmatization shapes this according to a supernatural and divine type, specifically distinct from all natural stigmatization. In the same way, too, as the grace of God raises nature without destroying it, so the miracle here consists not in suppressing but in uplifting the psycho-physiological forces of the organism until they are made to produce *stigmata of a marvellous type*. In order to convince ourselves fully of this let us examine in detail their appearance, their causality, their localization, their choice of days, their pathological nature, their evolution, and all the marvellous accidental circumstances which easily distinguish them from all counterfeits.

1. The period of their *appearance* in the history of the Church is a first proof that natural forces are not enough to produce the stigmata of the saints. If it be the emotion felt by souls at the memory of the Passion of the Saviour and as a result of meditation on his sufferings that produces stigmata, how comes it that this emotion was barren during the first twelve centuries of Christianity? What period was ever more favourable for stigmatization than that of the early Church, when faith was so vivid and its memories so recent and so impulsive? How is it that, on the day of the Passion, the holy women, and above all Mary, the tender mother of Jesus, whose heart was pierced with seven swords of sorrow, were only stigmatized

metaphorically and not in reality? It cannot then be emotion alone without a very special assistance from Providence that has been productive of stigmata in our saints.

2. Nor is it the *desire* which they might have felt for them. What desire could the first stigmatic, St Francis of Assisi, who had never seen the stigmata, have felt for them? *Ignoti nulla cupido!* Even after having received them, he still so little desired them that he hid them in the greatest confusion. The humility of all true stigmatics caused them such martyrdom that they prayed the Lord at least to render these bleeding wounds invisible, and more than once their ardent prayer was heard. Several of them even were stigmatized without perceiving it. When Catherine Emmerich received the five wounds, it was a young girl who drew her attention to the stigmata which had just appeared. Some weeks before a bleeding cross had been imprinted on her breast: she had not noticed it.[1]

Their case, then, is in no wise comparable to that of the foolish longings of pregnant women, or to that of hypnotic subjects on whom the hypnotizer, by means of suggestion, imposes some order or desire which becomes realized, or who impose it on themselves by auto-suggestion. The state of their soul, far from preparing them for stigmatization, would rather tend to render them immune from it. The appearance of stigmatization without desire or suggestion, then, is naturally inexplicable.

3. The *seat* or localization of the five wounds is a no less marvellous thing. Hypnotic stigmata have not as yet been seen in the five appointed spots. Why should emotion bring out the blood from the hands or feet or side rather than from the elbow, the forehead, or any other part of the human body? We do not know. The image of the wounds of the crucifix is only present to the eyes or in the cortical strata of the person stigmatized. How could it be powerful enough to imprint lesions analogous to these wounds in the same places? Experience of it has never been realized, and in order to explain the fact the intervention of a superhuman intelligence and power must be admitted, and the designs and the action of God in his Church taken into account.

4. And not only are there certain spots which are chosen in preference to other parts of the body, there are also *days* and *weeks* for the periodical flow of blood and the renewal of the sufferings and mysteries of the Passion. Ordinarily it is the Friday (*feria sexta*) on which Christ died on the Cross, or

[1] Dr. Imbert, *La stigmatisation*, vol. ii, p. 230.

during Holy Week, or at periods dear to Christian piety. Once again, such a choice could not be understood unless willed by a higher intelligence. The divine stigmata evolve in the liturgical cycle traced by the Church; this, again, is another extraordinary sign by which they may be recognized. There is no possible comparison with the periodicity of certain pathological crises such as a quartan or double quartan fever. The last-named has a blind mathematical recurrence, whereas the periodicity of stigmata is intelligent and has a meaning.

5. If the wounds of true stigmatics are examined *in themselves* we are no less bewildered to discover that these wounds which, in appearance, are similar to any others, nevertheless differ from them in an essential characteristic, the *absence of suppuration*. The blood which flows from them is always quite pure, without the least sign of pus or fetor.[1] In the whole course of history purulent stigmata have never been seen. Dr. Imbert[2] relates the numerous inquiries that were made on the subject, especially that in 1813 on Catherine Emmerich by her ordinary physician, Dr. Wesener. "Never," he declares, "was it possible to find the least shadow of suppuration, while the least natural injury *at any other point* immediately had this result on the invalid." Wesener rightly found in this a very clear proof of the extra-natural character of these stigmatic wounds, for it is well known that on contact with the air all wounds suppurate. "Is it not a pathological law that no dead part can subsist in the living organism," writes Dr. Goix, "without producing around it a labour of elimination (red inflammation, suppuration, etc.), which were never shown in the hands and feet of St Francis?"[3] The fact, then, is not a natural one.

"It is no more natural," adds Dr. Imbert, "that stigmata never *become healed*, in spite of ordinary remedies, and that they persist during twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty years as fresh and piercing as on the first day. They must be sustained in their continuance by some secret power. They have, in fact, often been treated but never cured."

[1] One case, however, of fetid odour, but without suppuration, is cited, that of St Rita, who was obliged on this account to live apart by a special command of God. This characteristic ought not to be exaggerated.

[2] *La stigmatisation*, vol. ii, p. 79.

[3] *Bulletin de la Société médicale de Saint-Luc*, May, 1898.

6. " Even more extraordinary," continues the same doctor, " are the *hemorrhages* of these stigmata, and this for three reasons:

" *Firstly*, there ought not to be hemorrhage. The nature of stigmata, whether they be flesh nails, tubes, congealed caked blood, or ordinary wounds, does not, medically speaking, admit of a flow of blood. It is quite regular for the blood to flow on the first day of the impression of the stigmata in consequence of the divine traumatism; but after this hemorrhage ought no longer to be produced; nevertheless it does take place, God knows how frequently.

" *Secondly*, nothing justifies the *abundance* of hemorrhage so often mentioned. Stigmata are usually in a superficial position of the skin, far from the great vessels. The blood only issues through the dermis by more or less microscopic holes, or else by cuts and scabs, as well as at the surface of wounds visible to the naked eye. These being the conditions we may well be astonished at the streams of blood which sometimes flow from these divers wounds.

" *Thirdly*—and this is the main point—these hemorrhages are *periodical;* they take place chiefly or exclusively on Friday. Now a natural wound has never been known in medicine to have a flow of blood on a fixed day of every week; periodic hemorrhage does not exist in nosology."[1]

7. The astonishment felt by physicians at these *extraordinary wounds* does not end here. The *successive pains* occasioned by them in those that are stigmatized are out of all proportion with their character as wounds usually superficial and of small compass. And the pains, very far from maddening, disfiguring, and marking the faces of those in ecstasy, *transfigure* them and communicate to them a heavenly beauty.

At times their stigmata send out incomparable *perfume* and *light*, as happened with St Francis of Assisi, St John of the Cross,[2] Blessed Lucy of Narni,[3] and many others cited by Dr. Imbert. Occasionally their bodies *are raised in the air* and remain suspended there for a length of time, as we shall show in the following article. Finally, stigmatized ecstatics are almost always seers; for instance, they *discern* persons, scrutinize their consciences, recognize holy and blessed objects,

[1] *La stigmatisation*, vol. ii, pp. 81, 82.
[2] *Vie*, by Antoine d'Aça, ch. xiv, p. 143.
[3] *Vie des saintes filles de Saint-Dominique*, by Jean de Sainte-Marie, vol. ii, bk. i, ch. v.

of this, which, moreover, was confirmed by autopsy, was scrupulously verified at the process of beatification. Thousands of pilgrims, again, quite recently, during the centenary of 1882, were able to contemplate these wounds, intact and incorrupt as ever, after three hundred years' preservation in her crystal reliquary.

The heart exhibits five wounds, of which the largest, 5 centimetres long, is horizontal, gaping, and deep. It ought to have been mortal, but it was this stab of death that gave life, prolonged it, and gave it increase for twenty-three years, because it was given by the hand of the Lord. As St Teresa sang in her lofty hymn of the Transverbation, it is God who performed this marvel! In this poetical masterpiece she reveals herself not only as an eminent psychologist and poet, but also as an inspired prophet; and the autopsy was an enlightening revelation of the miracle, prophesied to future generations by means of an immortal song.

This revelation is also a startling refutation of the artifice of those timorous critics who are reluctant to admit invisible stigmata, professing some disdain for the category of these fellow-sufferers, venerable as it is. It might be said that God has been sometimes pleased to disprove this narrow view—which limits his infinite power in so arbitrary a manner—by permitting the stigmata of several saints, such as St Catherine of Siena, to become visible only after their death. These saints, although during life stigmatized invisibly, were in reality none the less really so in the eyes of him who sees all things.

Moreover, the saints, on whose judgement we may rely, have been unanimous in looking upon concealed stigmata as no less precious, and even more so, than the others, since, after having acquired the stigmata visibly, they forthwith besought Almighty God to render them invisible.

§ 2

Levitation

It often happens that ecstatics are raised above the ground and there maintained without any natural support: this is known as *ascensional ecstasy*. Occasionally their bodies fly to great heights and balance themselves majestically with the least breath of wind: this is *ecstatic flight*. More rarely, again,

they skim the earth or the water rapidly as the swallow flies from the ground: this is *ecstatic progress*.

These three marvellous phenomena have this in common, that the bodies of the ecstatics seem in such cases transfigured by that supernatural agility which glorified bodies will enjoy in the day of resurrection: it is therefore known as levitation.

In spite of the strangeness of these facts, they cannot be doubted. Not only are they *perfectly authentic*, but, moreover, frequent in the lives of ecstatic saints. It is enough to open the immense collection of the Bollandists, in their most authoritative documents, to meet with striking examples of them. They have often been discussed and verified in processes of canonization. Furthermore, the Church has made mention of them in her liturgical offices, as may be seen in the Roman Breviary and in the numerous offices granted to various religious Orders for their saints and blessed. Thus commemoration is made of the ascensional ecstasies of St Paul of the Cross (April 28), of St Philip Neri (May 26), of St Stephen of Hungary (September 2), of St Joseph of Cupertino (September 18), St Peter of Alcantara (October 19), St Francis Xavier (December 3), St Agnes (January 21), and so on.

St Francis seems to have been the first stigmatic and also the first ecstatic whose spontaneous elevation above the ground was officially confirmed, but since that time verifications have been multiplied. Here are some instances:

St Peter of Alcantara was unable to hear the lofty words of St John, *Verbum caro factum est*, pronounced without falling into ecstasy and being raised above the earth. The Franciscan, Biagio of Caltanisetta, went into ecstasy simply at the names of Jesus and Mary, and, enraptured with their beauty, sprang into the air. Blessed Giles, of the Order of St Dominic, remained suspended in the air in ecstasy for whole nights without it being possible to bring him back to earth, or even to give the least inclination to his body. After her communions, Mary of Agreda became slightly raised from the ground, like a dead body, and seemed to be so light that those who stood by were able to rock her with the slightest breath. King Philip II experienced the same phenomenon with Fr. Dominic of Jesus-Mary, who also performed the same ecstatic flight in the monastery of Valencia. St Thomas of Villanova, whilst preaching one day in his cathedral, suddenly went into ecstasy and remained suspended in the air for twelve hours, and so on.

Several of these ecstatics displayed wonderful strength at

the time. St Francis of Assisi in his aerial flight carried with him Brother Maffi; Jane Rodriguez carried away with her the two companions who each gave her an arm on account of her weakness.

The most powerful among them seems to have been St Joseph of Cupertino, of whom a thousand wonderful things are related. One day he saw a dozen workmen in great difficulty in their endeavour to erect an enormous and very heavy mission cross. He came to their assistance, and, assuming his aerial flight, raised the cross and placed it without effort in the hole prepared for it.

These ecstatic elevations often took place in churches and in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It might be thought that the saints were raised from the stones and held suspended in the air as though to be like the lamps of the sanctuary which are consumed before the heavenly Lamb.

The *return to the ground*, after more or less long suspension, moreover takes place slowly and without shock. Not only is there no suggestion of indelicate gesture, but an entire lack of motion in the limbs; the body is like a marble statue—*statua marmorea*—as was said of Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, who was raised and lowered with surprising ease and swiftness. *Suaviter demittebatur* is equally said of St Albert.

And what is more wonderful—just as the *recall* from ecstasy can be brought about either spontaneously or by order of a lawful superior—the descent from the air which no physical violence could effect is at once produced by the verbal or even mental order of one who has received the power to command.

As regards the *physical mode* by which ascension is produced, it may be supposed that the body is raised from below or drawn from above without loss of weight, or else that it really loses weight, becomes lighter than air, and is so raised in virtue of the well-known law of Archimedes.

Both hypotheses are plausible. The first perhaps fits in better with St Teresa's account of her own elevations. She feels, she tells us, as it were some power beneath her feet which uplifts her. Nevertheless, this subjective sensation might be the same had her body been raised by its own lightness. This therefore does not exclude the second hypothesis, which would seem to be much more likely, both *a priori*, by analogy with glorified bodies, and because of many well-authenticated facts from which it appears that the ecstatics became so

light as to be easily moved or lifted. We have already noted this as regards Mary of Agreda in the monastery of Burgos, and Fr. Dominic of Jesus-Mary, whom King Philip II rocked in the air with the slightest breath, like soap bubbles by the breath of a child.

Nevertheless, in singular contrast to this ecstatic lightness, other saints have exhibited the inverse phenomenon of superhuman heaviness. St Joseph of Cupertino, whose ecstatic flights are matter of legend, occasionally remained stretched on the ground, adhering so intensely thereto that none of his brethren were able to raise him. And analogous accounts are to be found in the lives of St Lucy of Syracuse, martyr; of St Agnes, sister of St Clare; of Blessed Mary d'Oignies; of the Venerable Mère Agnès de Langeac, and many other ecstatics.

It now remains for us to seek for some reasonable explanation, natural or supernatural, of these undeniable facts.

Attempts at a *natural explanation* are not lacking. Far be it from us to condemn such endeavours: it is even a duty for the scholar to test natural hypotheses before having recourse to others, and all that we condemn in them is the obstinate denial of anything supernatural. The rationalist principle that every phenomenon in this world can have only a natural cause is contrary not only to Christian faith, but also to sound philosophy; it is unscientific from its source, for a true scholar ought to submit himself humbly to facts rather than seek to adapt them to *a priori* negations.

All the naturalistic hypotheses may be placed in three groups. Levitation of the body might be due either to some secret power of the soul, or else to some unknown force belonging to bodies themselves, or finally to the influence of spirits other than God and the angels.

I. The *first* explanation, that of a *psychical force*, is due to Görres, the famous author of *Théologie Mystique*. According to him the soul might be able to alter the centre of gravity of the body and thus render movements possible—such, for instance, as flight—which man in his ordinary state is unable to perform. Here are his words: " The organs of motion," he says, " are meant for walking, but when the soul predominates over the body, the *element of air* takes ascendency over the others, the bird nature becomes developed within it, that of the animal yields to this, and the body, freed from its

envelope, joyfully flies towards the higher light to which it is drawn."[1]

If this expression of Gōrres were only a poetical image symbolizing the flight of the soul towards God, repeating with the Psalmist: *Who will give me wings like a dove and I will fly and be at rest—Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbae*[2]—we should willingly accept the graceful picture. But it is really a psychological explanation which he claims to suggest, and this we are unable to grant him.

How could the soul, which is spiritual, " make the air element predominate " to the point of rendering the body lighter ? This is something that it is not possible to grasp. For if the soul, instead of developing some spiritual power, produced only a physical force, such as a more subtle air, we would relapse into those experiments in white magic which are described by M. Rochas, after a member of the Royal Society of London, in these words: " The heaviest person in the company lies down on two chairs. Four others are placed round him, one at each foot and one at each shoulder. At a given sign the one lying down and the four others *take a deep breath of air*. As soon as the lungs are filled the one who is lying down gives the signal for lifting, and the four others by whom he is lifted find him as light as a feather."[3] The same writer remarks that these secrets of amusing physics have been known and practised for centuries by the Brahmins, who, in certain religious exercises, in order to render their bodies lighter, sometimes breathe the air deeply and sometimes retain the breath by closing the nose and mouth.

We do not know whether the devotees of Brahma or the curious belonging to the London Society are able to give themselves up to such ridiculous practices without laughing; but we are certain that our holy ecstatics have nothing to fear from their competition.

II. The most subtle air inflated in the lungs being powerless to explain levitation, other scholars have had recourse to unknown *physical forces*, which is the second hypothesis that has supplanted the first.

As these physical forces are not known, what name can be

[1] Görres, *Mystique*, part iii, ch. xxiii.
[2] *Ps.* liv 5.
[3] De Rochas, *Forces non définies*, p. 121.

given them ? M. de Rochas calls them *undefined forces*.[1] Others, more bold, but no less lacking in knowledge, have called them by the most various names—electricity, magnetism, animal magnetism, nervous fluid, vital effluvia, polarity, odic current, and so forth. It is obvious that in the realm of the unknown fantasy is without limitation.

Electricity was first of all in favour; this was easy to understand in a century such as the last, when electrical discoveries were so remarkable. This century even saw *electric women*, such as Angélique Cottin, patronized by Arago; Claire Vautier, who was studied by Charcot; or Honorine Séguin, of whom Figuier relates the following account: " An electric wind blew her skirts out . . . At her command her chair turned or slid on the floor; it struck knocks as ordered; it performed a thousand antics, resting and balancing itself on two legs and beating time to Honorine's singing; finally, it turned itself violently upside down."[2] But neither Honorine nor her chair had as yet the gift of aerial flight. Doubtless the current was not strong enough.

Dr. Audollent, a fervent apostle of the *universal fluid*,[3] remarks in this connection that " the nervous system is a veritable electric plant containing storing and producing centres (the brain, the marrow, the ganglia), spare currents, and switches (nerve plexus), wires (nerves), electrodes and receivers (papillæ, organs of sense, various terminations)." Man, then, must be a regular electric battery.[4]

All these comparisons are certainly curious and interesting. But on the one hand they prove an analogy between the two fluids, nervous and electric, but by no means an identity. On the other hand, if the human body were normally constructed like an electric machine, how comes it that only abnormal people, " sensitives," and a very small number among these, are able to make it manifest ? Why are they alone able to produce currents capable of raising weights and moving furniture ? Is there not reason to suspect in these rarely privileged folk among the human species, either some ingenious trick or some conscious or unconscious fraud, or, again, the intervention of some outside power ?

We shall spare our readers the more or less scientific hypo-

[1] De Rochas, *ibid.*
[2] Figuier, *Hist. du merveilleux*, vol. iv, pp. 211 *ff.*
[3] *Revue du monde invisible.*
[4] Dr. Audollent, *Concours médical*, no. 2, January 8, 1898.

theses imagined with regard to the other "undefined" forces, such as polarization, nervous effluvia, odic currents: hypotheses of prodigious complexity which barely hide their perpetual contradictions with each other and with known laws.

It is enough for us to quote the judgement respecting these facts pronounced by a well-known master of science, Dr. Grasset. "As to the question of the displacement of objects at a distance without contact and the phenomena of levitation . . . I would say the same thing . . . It would require scientific evidence, and this does not exist. This group is typified by Eusapia Palladino. You know by what men of scientific worth and absolute honesty she has been studiously examined; she causes the scales of a weighing machine to rise, overturns furniture, or gives taps at a distance. Here again, in numerous works published on this exteriorization of motion, particularly in those of Col. de Rochas, will be found curious and deeply disturbing records. But there are also evil experiences, not of failure (which in itself proves nothing), but of positive fraud (conscious or not). Hence we cannot help asking ourselves whether in the other experiences there has not also been some unknown or untraced fraud."[1]

Nevertheless the famous professor admits, as do we also, that there exists in the human body, especially among sensitives, nervous effluvia, whatever name may be given to them. Their existence is undeniable and shown in a thousand ways, particularly by M. de Puyfontaine's ingenious manometer, which registers their passage and force by means of the oscillations of the magnetic needle. But all these currents are relatively light and obviously incapable of explaining how the human body can float in the air in spite of its weight.

This levitation or aërial flight of our ecstatic saints is not even attempted by our most celebrated mediums. They are content with moving furniture at a distance or throwing it into the air. Moreover, in order to succeed they ask that there be little or no light, and the famous Eusapia always found that there was too much of it: *Meno luce!*

It is not thus, in darkness, but in the full light of day, that our ecstatics perform their marvels. Neither St Joseph of Cupertino nor St Colette nor St Teresa nor St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi sought moments of darkness. And St Thomas of Villanova, suspended in ecstasy for twelve hours during a sermon in his cathedral, did not take the precaution of having

[1] Dr. Grasset, *Le spiritisme devant la science*, p. 328.

the candles extinguished. All most assuredly defy the competition of our theatrical conjurers, and their examples show how insufficient is the theory of effluvia. We hasten, therefore, to deal with the final hypothesis.

III. The explanation by the *intervention of spirits* has been suggested—we might even say imposed—by the fact, recognized by every sincere observer, that in the greater number of cases, at least, levitation appears to obey some will and intelligence. It is therefore not a purely physical fact which would be sufficiently accounted for by material effluvia.

This is manifest in the case of those ecstatics who are gently brought back to the ground simply at the command of a lawful superior, whereas such an order would be powerless to stay an electric or magnetic current and to arrest the course of natural forces. We do not, however, lay stress on this.

With regard to the moving of furniture in spiritist seances, it can hardly be denied that this is sometimes obedient to prayer, to the bidding or even the mere desires or purely mental intentions of those present. The intervention of some intelligent entity—at least when the experiment is not fraudulent—is then no longer a simple hypothesis, but an explanation that is thrust upon us; for an intelligence alone is able either to bring about intelligent phenomena or to draw physical effects from matter by command. This "entity" is an adequate and complete cause of levitation.

All honest scholars have been obliged to recognize this. Thus M. de Rochas, in spite of the fact that he maintains the theory of natural effluvia, admits that "in much rarer cases he acknowledges the intervention of an *intelligent force*, acting as a living being, which seizes and transforms the sufferer. . . . *Intelligent beings*, good or bad, take possession at times of the effluvia in order to act on the body."[1]

In the same way Dr. Dupouy, whose authority is here of considerable weight, declares that "for the last fifty years we have had authentic knowledge of phenomena produced by an *intelligent force*, in the case of individuals more or less affected with neurosis, *mediums*, as they are called at the present time."[2] Although a fervent champion of "polarity," Dr. Dupouy declares it hereby to be quite insufficient to account for levitation.

What, then, are these "intelligent entities" who produce it

[1] *Cosmos*, March 5, 1898.
[2] *Libre Parole*, August 6, 1899

or at least co-operate as the principal cause in its production? The spiritist school is unanimous in admitting only *disembodied* souls, and thus is confined to the purely natural sphere eschewing everything supernatural. It is not difficult to show the manifest falseness of this view in the light not only of Christian faith, but even of sound philosophy.

The souls of the dead—the natural continuation of this visible world beyond the grave—are, as St Thomas says, no longer able either to exert influence over this world or to appear to or communicate with us, except by miracle, through a very special command of God: *Quod mortui viventibus apparent "qualitercumque" vel contingit per specialem Dei dispensationem . . . et est inter divina miracula computandum.*[1]

The philosophical reason is quite simple. If it be true, as common-sense requires us to believe, that we can neither see without eyes, hear without ears, nor feel nor act without sensible or motive organs, it is clear that the souls of the dead, being deprived of these, can no longer communicate with this world in order, for instance, to put bodies in motion or induce their levitation.

For the same reason they cannot even know what passes here below, at least directly, "unless informed by divine enlightenment in an indirect way." "The souls of the dead," says St Thomas, "being by the divine will and by their manner of existence separated from the conversation of the living, do not know naturally what passes here below; if the souls of the just know this it is by grace."[2] But if God gives them the knowledge it is always for a useful purpose and in conformity with their holy desires; hence the cultus of the saints and the prayers which unite the blessed with the Church militant. This favour is never granted by God for vain objects, unworthy of the divine majesty; still less for unlawful or evil ends. It is not, therefore, the souls of the departed that are evoked by spiritist mediums; it is not they who come, by permission from God, to satisfy the unhealthy curiosity of their spectators, superstitious and credulous, even when they are not perverse and impious.

The upholders of spiritist teaching have well realized this defect in their hypothesis, which gives to disembodied souls the power of influencing bodies, and this is how they seek to correct it. "The spirits," says Dr. Gibier, "which are the souls of our forefathers, make use of us as instruments;

[1] I, q. lxxxix, a. 8, ad 2. [2] I, q. lxxxix, a. 8.

we lend them our natural fluid in order for it to be combined with their own, and by means of this mingling there is set up a ' fluidic body ' by the help of which they act on matter."[1]

Such a conception is indeed strange! Separated souls, then, must possess a nervous fluid able to be blended with our own! The contradiction is too ridiculous. For if by " fluidic body " spiritists mean the theory of the " double " or of the " plastic mediator " between the soul and the body, which is neither corporal nor spiritual, or else both at once, we have already shown above that this clumsy hypothesis is unworthy of serious thought.

There remains the hypothesis that the separated soul makes use of a certain fluid to act on bodies which it causes to move. If this soul were a pure spirit it would have no need whatever of a fluid in order to act on the body; it would act directly in virtue of its hierarchic superiority in the order of substance, in which the lower is subject to the higher without reciprocity, and the so-called fluid would be a quite useless appendage, in virtue of the axiom *Non sunt multiplicanda entia sine necessitate.*

Unfortunately the human soul is not a pure spirit. It is made for a body, and for one particular body only, that which it informs and vivifies. Now it is impossible for a human soul to inform and vivify anything other than a human body. To say that it informs and vivifies a fluid would be to say that this fluid becomes living, that it acquires the properties common to living beings, such as nutrition and reproduction. This would be a manifest absurdity.

The human soul, then, can only move something through the motive organs of its body, and since, in the case of the dead, it is deprived of these, it can move nothing at all. Such is the conclusion of sane philosophy. It is also that of St Thomas: *Unde cum anima secundum suam naturam determinetur ad movendum corpus cujus est forma, nullum aliud corpus sua naturali virtute movere potest.*[2] And in the same article the holy Doctor repeats that the soul can only move the body it vivifies—*non movet corpus nisi vivificatum*—unless through a miracle which God may occasionally permit: *supra quam (potestatem) potest aliquid ei conferri virtute divina.* Our spiritist mediums, then, perform miracles without willing or suspecting it!

To these proofs from reason the heart adds its own no

[1] Dr. Gibier, *Fakirisme occidental.*
[2] I, q. cxvii, a. 4, ad 1.

less decisive: "O my dear dead ones, is it you who speak in table-turning and appear before the magic circle of a necromancer? Is it you that I must recognize in the humiliating foolishness which these tables utter? Is it you who would be the abettors of a sorcerer's vengeance or of the base-mindedness of a vendor of quackery who deceives his dupe with the promise of impossible secrets; of happiness without pain, or the past lived again in a day? Ah! surely it is not so. It is not and never will be possible. . . . It is the dead themselves who slay occultism!"[1]

The reader will have already drawn a general *conclusion* from all the exclusions that we have just made. If objects are made to move at a distance and without contact in occult or spiritist seances, it is due neither to some hidden property of the soul, nor merely to unknown effluvia emanating from the body, nor to the action of "discarnate" souls; we must then seek the real cause elsewhere, *either in deceit or in devilry*.

Deceit, conscious or unconscious, has been unmasked more than once in the most famous mediums, such as Eusapia Palladino. The fact is certain, and we have heard scholars such as Dr. Grasset proclaim it without hesitation. On the other hand, effluvia that wait until besought before they act, which obey the orders or desires of those present, answer their questions, occasionally speak in every language, show themselves to be too intelligent not to spring from "intelligent entities"; nor can they be either God or the holy angels, but evil spirits. These two factors seem to act in turn or both together, and the most obvious conclusion must therefore be: BOTH *deceit* AND *devilry*.

This also is the conclusion which Benedict XIV laid down as the principle of research and discussion in processes for the canonization of saints: "No natural power can produce levitation of the body"—*Naturaliter dari non potest ut corpus a terra sublevetur*.[2] This to him, as to us, is a physical impossibility, because contrary to the universal law of gravitation. But it is not beyond the power of the devils; Benedict XIV immediately states this: *Non enim id ejus daemonis efficaciam et potestatem excedit*.

There is here a counterfeit of the marvellous gift communicated by God to our ecstatics, not because it is essential to

[1] Georges Bois, *À travers l'occultisme*, reflex. xi.
[2] *De canonisat. sanct.*, III, c. xlix, n. 3.

ecstasy, adds the great Pope, but as its complement. Ecstasy in fact is a participation, although imperfect, in the beatific vision of the elect in heaven, and levitation is a participation in the gift of agility which the bodies of these blessed ones possess in glory. Rapture of the transfigured body thus becomes the manifest sign and symbol of that of the soul, and the resemblance of our saints on earth to the blessed in heaven appears then to be more complete and more striking.[1]

§ 3

Luminous effluvia

Ecstasy, occasionally ascensional, is perhaps still more often luminous. Benedict XIV states, in fact, that there would be no end to the enumeration of all the cases of supernatural splendour with which the saints were irradiated, if such were desired. *Si quis in hoc caput transcribere vellet radios et splendores qui in facie sanctorum, dum viverent, apparuerunt, et qui inter miracula recensentur, nunquam finem capiti imponeret.*[2]

Varieties.—Sometimes it is the head or the face alone that gives forth a luminous aureole, but often the whole body also is surrounded with light. Ecstatics have been seen, although more rarely, to light up the whole church or cell during their nocturnal ecstasies; so much so as to suggest a fire, which others have run out to extinguish. Instances of fiery rays escaping from their eyes or hands are also cited.

The prototype of such luminous transfigurations in ecstasy was that of our Lord himself on Mount Thabor. As the Evangelist bears witness, whilst in prayer Christ's vesture became of dazzling whiteness like snow, and his face shone like the sun.[3]

In the Old Testament[4] we read, in the account of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai, another memorable example of the luminous splendours which can be reflected by a human being after a face-to-face conversation with the divine majesty.

[1] *Non quia* (*haec elevatio*) *habeat intrinsecam connexionem cum ecstasi . . . sed quia, cum haec ecstatica contemplatio divinorum assimiletur, et quasi sit inchoatio ejus, quae futura est in beatitudinem animarum, Deus, ut id doceat, hoc speciale donum aliquando concedit raptis, quod donum est quaedam imperfecta participatio dotis agilitatis quam corpora gloriosa obtinebunt* (*De canonisat. sanctor.*, III, c. xlix, n. 4).

[2] *De canonisat. sanctor.*, IV, 1st part, c. xxvi, n. 13 *ff.*

[3] *Matt.* xvii.

[4] *Exod.* xxxiv.

The sacred writer tells us that he was obliged to cover his face with a veil in order not to blind or strike with terror those to whom he delivered the Tables of the Law.

Light, in fact, in the common language of Holy Writ, is the principal symbol and sensible manifestation of the divinity. Not only does God dwell in inaccessible light—*lucem inhabitat inaccessibilem*[1]—but he is pure light without any darkness: *Deus lux est et tenebrae in eo non sunt ullae.*[2] And it is this light which guides and enlightens the saints and shines in their faces: *Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui Domine.*[3]

It is unnecessary to recall the innumerable texts which extol the divine light; their witness places beyond doubt the great fitness and beauty of this symbolic and wonderful phenomenon, so frequent among ecstatics. It is better to hasten on to defend it against the naturalistic interpretations of free-thinkers.

Naturalistic explanations.—It would seem that the human body is naturally the source of luminous effluvia, and that consequently the aureoles of ecstatics are in no way surprising or supernatural.

One of the first to make experiments on this hypothesis was the chemist C. de Reichenbach. Influenced by an already very ancient theory, he set himself to show the existence of vague gleams which escaped, he believed, from the tips of the fingers, and he gave them the queer name of *odic* effluvia, or of *od*, a word drawn from the languages of the north. Others have called them psychical bodies, astral bodies, nimbus, perisprit, and so on, according to the nature and role which they are supposed to possess, infinitely variable and often contradictory. Reichenbach looks upon the *od* sometimes as a soul, at others as a body, or again, as a fluid midway between these. Others make of it a *divine light*, an *eternal breath*, a *transudation of the spirit*, or else, again, consider it as the *unique, eternal* substance and even as the *spirit of the divine humanity*.

These are purely rambling statements, an analysis and refutation of which would be here quite superfluous. They merely enable us to put our finger on the extent to which certain contemporary scholars are lacking in philosophical sense and the most elementary knowledge of ontology. Whatever be the nature of this vital luminous fluid which escapes from the human body, the only question to be asked here concerns its existence and the proofs claimed for it.

[1] 1 *Tim.* vi 16. [2] 1 *Joan.* i 5. [3] *Psalm.* iv 6.

First of all, let us avoid an ambiguity in which occultists seem to delight. All scholars without exception have recognized in the human body feeble electric or analogous currents—for they possess very slight velocity—which may also be called nerve-currents, although they are not proper to the nerves only. Thus any tissue taken from an animal and placed between the electrodes of a galvanometer always causes the magnetic needle more or less to deviate. This probably results from the chemical operation of nutrition, common to all living tissues. But to conclude from this that it is a vital fluid, in the proper sense—that is to say, that it lives, feels, and even passes out in order to act apart from the organs; to claim that " this vital force is not only accumulated within us but becomes partly externalized with all its properties, sensibility, motivity, and so forth,"[1] is one of those sophisticated reasonings which are condemned by logic no less than by common sense. No one denies that physico-chemical phenomena accompany the vital operation in its physiological labour. But it is unreasonable to confuse them and to identify the principle of life and feeling with any kind of fluid.

There still remains the suggestion that they are changed from one into the other by one of those " metabolic acts " of which Dr. Luys so often speaks, as though empty and sonorous words could be taken for a serious explanation. Dr. Surbled well answered him by this single piece of irony: " The learned physician of *la Charité*, who thought, wrongly, to find thinking cells, has at least some compensation; he has discovered *metabole*. Happy expression, which will immortalize his name, for it gives an answer to every problem and solves every difficulty. How does physical motion become vital motion? By *metabole*. How does sensation naturally result from cosmic vibration? By *metabole*. Always *metabole*, a term null and void, invented by ignorance at bay."[2]

The so-called vital fluid in the sense understood by occultists must then be rejected as fabulous, whilst granting them that there exists in the human body a purely physical fluid, electric, magnetic, nervous, or otherwise; but is it also luminous and sufficiently brilliant to explain the aureoles and supernatural splendours of our ecstatics? This is the question now to be studied.

The effluvia should be seen.—According to the occultists these

[1] *Concours médical*, no. 2, January 8, 1898, p. 17.
[2] Surbled, *Le problème cérébral*, p. 141.

may be seen and even photographed; they must then be luminous. Let us examine the proofs that are brought of this.

First, they are able to be seen and to produce in us luminous sensations. Here are the experiments made by Dr. Luys in support of this assertion. He introduces us to a "seer"—for everybody has not this gift—who "is able to recognize effluvia coming out of the magnetic needle and to describe the different colours of each at the two poles. The south pole gives out red effluvia, the north blue; the intermediate regions appear to him as yellow. . . . In man the seer notes that all the left side of the body presents a blue colour. The eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the lips, show irradiations of the same colour, which are the more intense as the subject is more vigorous. . . ."[1]

But then, who is this "seer" whom Dr. Luys makes use of in order to see what others do not see? He himself informs us: it is "a hypnotic subject, previously put in a state of somnambulism." We would add on our own behalf that, for the experiment to succeed, not only a hypnotic subject, but a *very practised* one, who has been subjected to a long training in this kind of research, is needed; whereas to see and contemplate the supernatural splendours of our ecstatics everybody without exception is able, without any artificial preparation. Here we have already an essential difference, which would be enough to destroy the suggested similarity.

But there are even better and greater. What, then, is this intensive preparation needed for these hypnotic seers? Those that have closely followed the practices of the imitators of Charcot and Luys have easily discovered it. It is suggestion. These intensely nervous subjects, "sensitives," are very apt for suggestion. They easily see all that it is suggested that they should see. After several seances of training their submissiveness, conscious or unconscious, goes even beyond positive suggestion: they conjecture the suggestive expectations of their operator and foresee his wishes. It is everywhere notorious that these "sensitives," mostly hysterical, easily allow their suggestibility to be exploited, when not themselves occupied in the sport of exploiting the credulity of their operators.

It happens also that the seers disagree not only with one another, but each with himself. M. de Rochas avows this in these words, which cannot be too greatly stressed: "I have

[1] Luys, *Communication à la Société de biologie, sur la visibilité des effluves.*

recognized through experiments methodically performed during fifteen years on numerous subjects, that the accounts of coloration given by these subjects do not always agree, the same subject occasionally even differing in his statements from one moment to another."[1] It is then a matter of subjective vision, of hallucination, without any objective reality.

On the preceding page the same writer cites this definite experience. After having *persuaded* his " subject " that the bar of iron which he handed him was abnormally magnetized, having its two poles on the left and right of the two longitudinal surfaces instead of at the extremities, the " seer " believed that he saw effluvia at these non-existent poles. The so-called effluvia, then, were equally non-existent. After this decisive experiment we admire the robust faith of the occultists who still believe in the luminous effluvia discovered by sensitives.

It is true that they still have another string to their bow. If you take exception to the testimony of sensitives because they are untrustworthy, they answer, you cannot question the results of photographic plates; now *effluvia can be photographed*, therefore they are really luminous.

We will listen, then, to the description of these new experiments, not without some prejudice, it is true, since occultists boast that they can photograph spirits and fix states of soul on their plates ! The process of Drs. Luys, David, and Baraduc is so simple as to be grasped by everyone. Apply the finger to a sensitive plate placed in a developing bath without disturbing the water. After ten or fifteen minutes' contact an impression of the finger becomes visible aureoled with luminous rays of greatly varied shape. This is a photograph of the luminous vital fluid.

Unfortunately for the conclusive value of this experiment the same result is obtained with the finger of a corpse lying exposed on the dissecting table, or even with an artificial rubber finger, and a thousand other inanimate objects, if they have previously been *warmed*. The so-called vital fluid, then, is out of the question.

M. A. Guébhard, professor of physics at the *Faculté de Médecine* in Paris, was, we believe, the first to give the scientific explanation of these mysterious stains obtained on the negatives of occultists which imitate aureoles, rays, flames,

[1] *Extériorisation de la sensibilité*, p. 8.

and the most diverse figures. This explanation is purely mechanical. All these curious groupings of molecules in the developing bath spring from motive causes, such as that of the radiant heat, not only of the human body, but of all other bodies. "I claim," he said, "that all these effects are due to the varied accidents of photography or else to certain physical agents, such as heat." He adds: "Every developing agent left to act on a plate capable of being darkened, produces, without the least *odic* impression, if only the bath is not more than a few millimetres in depth, a mark, not luminous, in spite of appearances, but in reality wholly chemical, directed according to lines, not of ethereal effluvia, but of *liquid flux*, imitating, by its action on the gelatine, all the divers aspects which we have seen so wonderfully described by such fine names."[1]

In support of this the same scholar has published his *Manuel de la photographie effluviste*, which is a manual for the "perfect operator," indicating all the recipes and knacks in order to obtain negatives spotted in most wonderful fashion, without having recourse to any of the cabalistic rites employed by occultists. It is useless previously to warm the plate "between two hearts," or to cover it "with three hands" (according to Baraduc's recipe), or to threaten it with the forefinger, or pierce it with a more or less fatal eye (Luys' systems), or to aim at it a long way off by "psychic projections" (telepathic photography); one obtains all these so-called luminous impressions of a pseudo-vital or animic force, including what M. Baraduc has called "four-ray pearls," without this, provided the dish is not balanced in the usual way.

To the practical manual M. Guébhard has added all the theoretical explanations respecting molecular physics, into which we do not intend to enter, for these belong to the domain of pure science, and may be read either in the *Revue scientifique*, October 9, 1897, and January 15, 1898, or in the report of the seances of the *Société de physique* held June 18 and July 16, 1897.

Henceforth experimental proof has been made, and all the fantastic classifications of the luminous "spots" of Baraduc and his rivals,[2] enumerating and subdividing the seven kinds of *lights of the soul*, break down and vanish into fiction.

Far be it from us, however, to think that the human body cannot sometimes be encircled with *natural light*. This would

[1] *Vie scientifique*, no. 9, October, 1897.

[2] Baraduc, *L'âme humaine, ses mouvements, ses lumières*.

be an exaggeration quite useless for our object. On this point the Roman Congregations themselves have shown very wide views, or, if preferred, an apparently excessive liberalism.

Benedict XIV, adopting the opinion of the scholars of his time, does not hesitate to write: " It is certain that natural flames have occasionally been seen to appear round the heads of certain men, and fire to burst out naturally from the human body."[1]

It is true that he moderates his remark by adding immediately that these lights are not flames, but rather electric sparks, and that they come not from the body itself, but from the clothing, the cane, or the instruments carried.

Such phenomena, moreover, are commonly observed: thus the eyes of certain animals and night-birds become luminous in the dark, and are able to throw out flashes even in the day. Certain fishes obtained by the *Talisman* from the depths of the ocean are even provided with phosphorescent organs which light and guide them in the darkness. As regards the hair and the beard, sparks are easily drawn from them in certain atmospheric conditions; and the crackling of electric sparks is often noticed, for instance, in stroking a cat's fur.

In the same way there are " electric " men, and especially women, several famous examples of whom we have already cited.[2] But it is a long way from these well-known phenomena to the " supernatural splendours " of our ecstatics ! In order to place this in greater relief we shall quote the conditions required in processes for the canonization of saints, to permit of their aureoles being declared miraculous.

A first condition is that the sanctity or heroic nature of the virtues of the persons in question must be well established. Then only can it be held with likelihood that these outward splendours are a reflection and symbol of the inward splendours of divine grace. Without this the question of the supernatural character of the aureoles would not even be raised, for they

[1] *Certum esse videtur nonnullas esse flammas quae naturaliter circa hominum capita apparent ; ex homineque ignem aliquando naturaliter emicare. . . . Non tamen in modum flammae assurgentis sed potius in scintillas se diffundentis . . . illis autem non immediate adhaerere, sed potius vestibus, baculo aut hastae* (*De canonisat. sanctor.*, IV, part 1, c. xxvi, n. 22).

[2] See also the case of Claire Vautier, *Écho du merveilleux*, November 13, 1898.

might be either illusory or natural, or, again, quite possibly demoniacal, for they are not beyond the power of devils.[1]

This preliminary question once decided in a favourable sense, the Church calls for certain qualities in the witnesses who claim to have seen the aureoles of light. Above all, they must be numerous, to avoid suspicion of their being all sick folk, or sufferers from neurosis or hallucination. Cases in point are those of Moses appearing before the children of Israel, and of St Francis de Sales, whose face shone with an intense light of glory in the sight of all his hearers while he was preaching. It is impossible to suppose that they were all " sensitives," or that they had all received the special training to which occultist " subjects " are previously subjected. After that of the witnesses come the characters of the lights themselves. These may be reduced to four principal ones:

1. The marvel must take place during some religious act, such as ecstasy, preaching, and so forth. It would then possess a religious character and indicate the intervention of divine grace.

2. It must take place in full daylight, and not in the semi-darkness of occultist seances. If at night, its brightness must rival not only all artificial light but even that of daylight: *si lux caeteris lucibus fuerit splendidior*, as Benedict XIV requires,[2] in order to leave no room for doubt.

3. It should be of noteworthy duration, and not rapid like that of an electric flash: *Non momentanea, sed diuturnior*. In fact, it is to be expected that a divine manifestation would leave the spectators all the time needed to contemplate it and become convinced of its reality.

4. The divine character of this marvel is recognized by the spiritual fruits of sanctification it produces, for God does not seek to satisfy vain curiosity with miracles, but only the good of souls.

It is not difficult, then, to distinguish between this divine light and the illusions of the devil or natural phenomena.

[1] *In quibus de miraculis judicium non profertur nisi post discussas approbatasque virtutes in gradu heroico, quae daemonis astus avertunt* (*De canonisat. sanctor.*, IV, part 1, c. xxvi, n. 17).

[2] *Ibid.*, n. 26 and 27.

§ 4

Fragrant effluvia

Ecstasies may be not only ascensional and luminous, but also sweet-smelling. It would seem that the suspension of sensibility in the ecstatic has its effect on all our senses, not one of which can escape emotions of wonder and admiration at so marvellous a phenomenon.

Perfumes play a *symbolical role* of high order in the language of Holy Writ. The divine Child at his birth received from the Magi gifts not only of gold and myrrh, but also of incense, the sweet perfume of which is reserved among every people for the worship of God. Magdalen, at the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon, bore witness to her love for him by anointing him with most precious perfume, the odour of which filled the whole house: *et domus impleta est ex odore unguenti.*[1] In heaven the seer of Patmos saw the four and twenty ancients prostrate before the Lamb with harps and golden vials filled with odours which are the prayers of saints: *habentes phialas aureas plenas odoramentorum quae sunt orationes sanctorum.*[2]

In figurative language the good odour signifies that which pleases; thus "God received the sweet savour of Noe's sacrifice," and Jesus Christ sacrificing himself on the cross was "a host and victim of sweet savour." According to St Paul we, the faithful, are "the good odour of Jesus Christ" —that is to say, that of all the virtues springing from Christ, the holiness of his Church is that which is the most powerful witness to him and most pleasing to God.[3]

It is not astonishing, then, that perfumes should be associated with the mystical gifts of God in the same way as light, nor that they should be the sweetest outward expression of these gifts as well as the most striking symbol as regards human sensibility. We are startled and astonished by light, but drawn and carried away with the inebriation of perfume: *Curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.*[4] Once this mystical symbolism is well understood, the meaning and beauty of these divine stigmata engendered in the light and perfume of heaven will be better grasped.

Cases are numberless. The patient researches of Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre have enabled him to reckon them by hundreds, and

[1] *Joan.* xii 3.
[2] *Apoc.* v 8.
[3] 2 *Cor.* ii 14.
[4] *Cantic.* i 3.

it is from his erudition that we draw the following briefly summed-up examples.[1]

The first is that of St Francis of Assisi, as testified to by his companion Blessed John of Alverno. Linen stained with blood from the stigmata, still preserved at Assisi, on certain feasts gives out sweet odours. One hundred years after the death of St Lydwine the linen with which her stigmata were enveloped was still filled with perfume. During the process of Blessed Lucy of Narni it was proved that her stigmatic wounds exhaled perfume. It was the same with Veronica Giuliani: "The wound in her side gave forth perfume when it was open. The sisters knew when it was open without seeing it owing to the fragrant odour emitted." Occasionally Veronica gave marvellous scents to the water with which she washed her hands, and this water cured the sick.

Not only the stigmata but the whole bodies of stigmatics has exhaled supernatural fragrance, "like those plants," says Dr. Imbert, "which throw out perfume from every part of the organism, from the root to the top of the flower." St Catherine of Ricci is a typical example of this. "Her body," says Fr. Bayonne, "sent forth a most sweet odour which surpassed every known perfume in the world. This did not happen always nor continuously. . . . It was chiefly when she was in prayer, or when she came out after Holy Communion, and during her hours of ecstasy. . . . Once all the nuns of the monastery (of Prato) had the joy of breathing these heavenly perfumes for twenty-four hours without a break whilst her ecstasy lasted. This odour clung to her clothing and every object she touched. . . . Sometimes the very places in which she communed with heaven remained sanctified through the presence of this heavenly balsam."

Nevertheless, with the greater number of ecstatics this "odour of sanctity" only began after death, at the moment when, for ordinary mortals, putrefaction begins. And these perfumes have persisted for years and even for centuries.

St Helen of Hungary had been dead for some time when it was wished to transfer her body to a more convenient place. It was found incorrupt, and gave out a celestial odour. The stigmata, closed towards the end of her life, were reopened in the tomb. The chaplain placed his two fingers into the wound of the side; he withdrew them bathed in pure blood having a most fragrant odour. The body of St Clare

[1] *La stigmatisation*, vol. ii, pp. 88 *ff.*

of Montefalco was preserved incorrupt in like manner for nearly six hundred years. In 1457, when St Rita of Cassia died, a wonderful perfume poured forth from her body. And in 1627 and 1682, when the coffin was reopened, the body was shown still incorrupt and the fragrance maintained.

Three years after the death of Blessed Osanna her body was found to be in a perfect state, and this was again shown to be the case in 1602, 1686, and 1871. St Catherine of Genoa and Blessed Lucy of Narni maintained the same marvellous incorruption. As regards the last-named, one hundred and sixty-seven years after death the wound in the side remained open and bathed in blood, and Benedict XIV made mention of this in her office. The Venerable Dominic of Paradiso, who died in 1555, was found in 1584, 1611, 1624, and 1748 with the face still beautiful, the skin white, with a delicious perfume. The same is told of the Venerable Mère Agnès de Langeac, whose incorruption and fragrance still remained in 1857; of St Colette, St Clare of Montefalco, Blessed Angela of Foligno, and others.

The death of St Teresa was glorified in a thousand ways, notably by perfumes; the water with which her body was washed remained scented. "It was that heavenly perfume," states her biographer, "the odour of which had been noticed several times during her life, and, greatly pronounced in her last illness, was still more so after her death; so much so that the nuns had to leave the door and windows open all night long in spite of the season." For nine months her coffin, deeply buried in the ground, gave out a mysterious perfume. The body was then exhumed; it was found to be intact, the flesh sweet, fragrant, and flexible as before death. A miraculous oil flowed drop by drop from all her members; it was collected on a great number of linen cloths, which retained the same scent. This incorruption of the body with its perfume was verified in 1594, 1604, 1616, and 1760.

Sweet-smelling balsams were also seen to exude for a longer or shorter time from the bodies of Blessed Jane of Orvieto, Blessed Margaret of Castello, St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and many others. The most remarkable of these cases was that of Mary Margaret of the Angels. This balsam was used for a sanctuary lamp as a posthumous act of homage to God in the Holy Eucharist, and the use of it lasted nearly to the time of the Revolution.

After having remarked that this wonder was granted to three

Carmelite saints, Dr. Imbert adds: "This would seem to be specially becoming in these privileged brides of Christ, who were consumed in prayer and penance as oil is consumed in the lamps of the sanctuary."

Such are the facts. Is it easy to make them conform to a *naturalistic interpretation?* We think not, and in evidence of this it is enough to examine the two attempts at explanation made by free-thinkers: the one *physical*, the other *psychical.*

I. The first appeals to the particular conditions of certain burial-grounds: the *geology* of the soil, or the dryness and temperature of certain climates.

But out of the forty thousand cemeteries in France and the millions of cemeteries throughout the world there ought to be found a goodly number having the needful geological and climatological conditions for the natural preservation and embalming of bodies. Let there be pointed out to us, then, a single one of these cemeteries in which all bodies, those of the faithful and others, holy or impious, without exception or discrimination, are preserved and embalmed. Yet if this privilege belongs exclusively to the saints, and to some only of these, the laws of nature, which are universal and inevitable, cannot be pleaded, but the providential action of the Spirit of God alone, "who bloweth where he will." The finger of God is here.

Moreover, in many cases there are special circumstances which clearly contradict the rationalistic explanation. Let us cite, among others, that of St Teresa, thus summed up by Dr. Imbert:

"When, nine months after her death, the body of St Teresa was exhumed, the coffin was broken on one side, rotted within, and full of earth and water; moisture had spoilt the clothing, the serge dress was reduced to tatters, the body itself covered with foam and greenish mud; but it was entirely intact, the flesh sweet, white, and perfumed, and flexible as on the day she died. Furthermore, the miraculous oil oozed drop by drop from all her members. Everything then about the holy body was putrefied excepting the body itself, in spite of a geological condition highly favourable to putrefaction." The explanation by geology and climate, then, falls to the ground.

II. Beaten, therefore, on this ground, in appearance the most plausible from the scientific standpoint, other free-thinkers, changing weapons, have recourse to *hallucination.*

As we have already seen, this is a most convenient explanation wherewith to evade a fact. It is enough to declare it to be non-existent, hallucinatory. Were the perfumes given out from St Teresa's members or from those of other stigmatics merely mental hallucinations ?

Nothing more unlikely ! This would be to suppose not only personal hallucination on the part of so many holy persons who, like St Teresa, were sometimes the light of their age by reason of their high intelligence, and always its example and sublime pattern by their force of will and heroic virtues, but also it would mean the collective hallucination of the innumerable witnesses in whose presence they lived as well as that of the scholars, physicians, philosophers, and theologians who drew up their processes of canonization or who have directed the causes for verification of relics for centuries, and continue to do so in our own day. The mere statement of such a supposition is enough to condemn it.

§ 5

Supernatural abstinence

The miracle of abstinence is often to be met with among ecstatic saints, especially among those bearing the stigmata. *The facts cannot be denied.* It is the most noble triumph of spiritual over animal life.

Before the time of our Lord, who by his example consecrated the complete fast of forty days, we have seen Moses, on Mount Sinai, abstaining from all food for the same length of time, before receiving from God the Tables of the Law. So also Elias, after having eaten of the mysterious bread given him by the angel, walked for forty days and nights to Horeb without having need to eat.

During the forty days of Lent, still retained by the Church with many mitigations, from Ash Wednesday to Easter, a considerable number of saints practised total abstinence from food or drink. Such were St Simeon Stylites, St Elizabeth the Thaumaturge, St Colette, and many others. St Dalmatius, again, prolonged his fast another forty-three days, from Holy Thursday until Ascension, in motionless ecstasy. According to St Teresa, St Peter of Alcantara only took bodily nourishment every third day, and sometimes prolonged his abstinence for whole weeks, in addition to the ordinary Lenten fast.

But there are cases of complete abstinence, without any food or liquid nourishment, for much longer periods, which are

much more wonderful. Here is the list, doubtless incomplete, drawn up by Dr. Imbert:[1]

" Blessed Angela of Foligno remained for twelve years without taking any nourishment; St Catherine of Siena about eight years; Blessed Elizabeth of Rente more than fifteen years; St Lydwine twenty-eight years; Blessed Catherine of Racconigi ten years; Dominic of Paradiso twenty years; in our own day, Rosa Andriani twenty-eight years; Domenica Lazzari and Louise Lateau fourteen years."

In order to prove the authenticity of these facts Benedict XIV drew up very severe rules of criticism. But we must not think that before his time these marvels were accepted with naive credulity without previous inquiry. The more astonishment they raised, the more they provoked mistrust, suspicion, watchfulness, and often unbelief.

Dr. Imbert cites some striking examples of this. In the eighth century, St Walburga having the reputation of living only by the Holy Eucharist, the Bishop had her placed under the supervision of a priest day and night to see whether she was deceiving them. In 1225, Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, having heard that a nun at Leicester had been for seven years sustained only by Holy Communion, refused to believe it, and immediately deputed not one, but fifteen ecclesiastics to watch her for a fortnight without losing sight of her for a moment. It was only after this severe trial that he declared himself convinced.

Occasionally it was the local inhabitants themselves who began to doubt and even to watch. Thus they mounted guard for one month, day and night, round the hermitage of Blessed Nicholas de Flue, or of the Rock, to be certain that no one brought him any food from outside. And at the end of the test, in 1487, they drew up a report.

Pope Innocent VII, during his sojourn at Perugia, had a judicial inquiry made into the case of Blessed Colomba of Rieti, who had taken no nourishment other than the eucharistic bread for more than twenty years. In 1659 the famous shepherdess of Laus was taken to the Bishop's house at Embrun in order to be more easily submitted to an inquiry respecting her visions and abstinence; she was guarded day and night for a fortnight. In 1813 Catherine Emmerich, whose abstinence was no less remarkable, was watched and guarded day and night for ten days by order of ecclesiastical authority.

[1] *La stigmatisation*, vol. ii, p. 183.

The twenty burghers entrusted with this prepared a circumstantial report, which was also confirmed by her physician, the famous Dr. Overberg.

In 1868 the abstinence of Sister Espérance of Jesus was officially confirmed by the Bishop of Ottawa, assisted by two physicians, one, Dr. Baubien, a Catholic, and the other, Dr. Ellis, a Protestant. She was subjected to most rigorous supervision for six weeks, locked in a room and guarded and watched by sisters who never left her. At the beginning of the experiment she weighed 113 pounds; at the end, in the presence of the Bishop of Ottawa, her weight had reached 124 pounds. The venerable Dr. Landry, Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of Quebec, who came to Royau in 1880, also testified to this in the presence of Dr. Imbert.

From October 25 to December 7, 1877, the abstinence of Josephine Reverdy was examined in like manner, as related in detail in the *Apparitions de Boulleret*, chapter v. She was constantly watched by ten women or girls, five by day and five by night, and the authenticity of the fact was recognized.

Moreover, there is another kind of control which goes to confirm the first and does away with any doubt. Not only do these abstaining saints eat nothing secretly, but they can no longer eat anything without throwing it up again immediately. It is not merely that they are exempt from the hunger common to all men, but also unable to sustain any earthly nourishment other than the Holy Eucharist.

Here, for instance, is the testimony of Blessed Raymond of Capua with regard to the inedia of St Catherine of Siena, whose confessor and biographer he was. At first her extraordinary fasting had produced murmurings against her from her companions and from all who knew her. She was accused of wishing to surpass the fast of our Lord, of seeking after singularity, and so on. Raymond himself was alarmed at these murmurs, and feared lest he were mistaken in his direction of this soul. In order to cut short the scandal he desired to force her to eat. Through obedience she did so, but very soon threw up all that she had taken with atrocious suffering, even to the vomiting of blood. Thus were confounded those who were accusing her of eating in secret; thus, too, Blessed Raymond, recognizing the divine will, had to return to his former advice to leave God to act. Catherine renewed her fast, which, far from weakening her health, seemed

to strengthen it, and was content with frequent communion. "The Eucharist," she avowed to her confessor, "refreshes me to such an extent that it is impossible for me to desire any kind of corporal nourishment."

Such are the facts, authenticated by very numerous and strict inquiries made by both religious and medical authority. Moreover, the integrity of the holy persons cited might have been enough to convince us. Such choice souls, evolving in the heights of sanctity, are incapable of lying and deceiving us. Moreover, the Church, guaranteeing them as certain, did not hesitate to make mention of these marvellous fasts in the Bull of Canonization of St Catherine of Siena, nor loudly to proclaim them in the beatifications of St Catherine of Genoa, St Peter of Alcantara, St Rose of Lima, and many others—nay, even to refer to them in the liturgical offices of several saints, notably that of St Joseph of Leonessa.

It remains to be seen if these fasts are capable of a natural interpretation or if they are truly divine.

Natural explanation.—When the famous German professor, Virchow, was consulted with reference to the marvellous abstinence of Louise Lateau, at Bois-d'Haine, although a free-thinker he was content to reply: *It is either trickery or a miracle.* Such is the verdict of science, as well as of ordinary common sense. And as we have already rejected the former of these alternatives, we might allow it to remain at that: miracle is evident.

Nevertheless, having in mind certain lay *fasting men* such as Tanner, Succi, Merlatti,[1] and many others who have made wagers in all the capitals of Europe and of the New World, and have often won them, we consider it more useful for our readers to press the subject further by pointing out the essential differences which distinguish these professional and speculative fasters from our saints.

Let us first of all recall the general principles of physiology; it is impossible to live without eating, because active life is a perpetual expenditure of forces which need corresponding or equivalent renewal. We cannot live without eating except by devouring ourselves by *autophagy*—that is, by making use of

[1] Merlatti abstained from solid nourishment, but he drank three litres of water per day. In that he already differed from mystical abstainers. As to Succi, he constantly boasted, it is said, of providing for his nourishment by means of compressed foods.

reserves already stored in the tissues, which, moreover, are quickly exhausted: with children at the end of from three to eight days, after from eight to forty days in the case of adults and old men. To drink water—which would then mean incomplete abstinence—might perhaps prolong life for double the time, but beyond these limits, which vary slightly with the individual, death through inanition inevitably takes place.

The duration of the abstinence of the fasting men above described, having never surpassed the limits thus fixed by science, has nothing miraculous about it, nothing surprising to one cognizant with the art.

Nevertheless, these limits themselves are only a general rule, to which medical science has already noted certain exceptions, and it is here that the problem becomes more complicated.

We have seen elsewhere[1] that among the lower animals life is able to pass from act to potentiality, and to be retained *in potentiality* for a long time, even for years. Thus the tardigrada, the rotifera, and so on, can be preserved after having been completely dried up, and then renew their active vitality at the contact of a drop of water. Even fishes and batrachia have been frozen without irrevocably perishing.

In proportion as one goes higher in the scale of beings, this possibility of preserving life in potentiality without changing it into act diminishes without entirely disappearing. A good example is seen in the hibernating animals, such as the marmots, which remain motionless and coiled up without eating or drinking during the whole of the bad season.

Here we have a great analogy with the exceptions which medical science has already verified in certain patients who are able to live beyond the normal limits without eating or drinking, but only with a life that is weakened, inactive, somnolent, and more or less resembles lethargy.

We read in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* that " these abstinences are usually to be found in women affected with a particular lesion of the nervous system, in whom the functions of decomposition are so to speak wholly inert, as is shown by the dryness of the skin, the absence of intestinal evacuation and of all mucous secretions, the absence of menstruation and even urinary secretion. . . . All such women live in complete inactivity, and with them the flicker of life throws out but a faint glimmer, on the point of becoming extinguished at

[1] Our treatise *La Vie*, pp. 281 *ff.*

every moment."[1] This lethargic state is even brought about artificially by the fakirs of India. They succeed in suspending every vital operation, even breathing, by stopping up all the orifices of the body, the mouth, the nose, the ears . . . and even the pores of the skin, which they smear over with a special ointment. Their lethargy, still more pronounced than that of the hibernating animals, may be prolonged, but it would end in death if they were not awakened in time.

In the main this exception, more apparent than real, confirms the rule that it is impossible to live without eating and drinking. If, very rarely, there is the appearance of living without it, it is an inactive life, more like death, which is slowly extinguished little by little. To live in an active way, in health, without eating or drinking, is a real miracle, then, and this law has no exception.

It is now easy to find out whether our holy abstinents belong to the category of active and healthy people, or to that of maniacs who spend several months in bed without eating or drinking, gradually becoming reduced thereby to adynamia and atrophy.

Louise Lateau neither ate nor drank, nor did she even feel the need to do so, nevertheless she had good health and went about her ordinary work. The Venerable Mère Agnès de Langeac continued the laborious exercises of community life without experiencing any fatigue; she was even in better health than the other nuns, who did not come near her in stoutness. St Catherine of Siena fulfilled all her ordinary duties with her customary vivacity and amiability, says her biographer: *Semper tamen alacris et jucunda.* The fast of St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, far from enfeebling her, so strengthened her that towards its last days she seemed never to have enjoyed better health. So also was it with St Rose of Lima, whom the Holy Eucharist fully nourished. Blessed Lucy of Narni, who passed a whole Lent and Advent in abstinence, was only feeble and languid on the days when she did not receive communion, whereas she was strong and happy after taking the eucharistic bread. Blessed Nicholas de Flue, in spite of his austere and emaciated face, retained none the less all his mental and bodily vigour.

It is useless to multiply these examples; they are as numerous as are the cases of supernatural abstinence among the saints. These are enough to show the evident contrast with pro-

[1] *Dict. des sc. médic.*, art. *Abstinence.*

fessional fasters, who have never gone beyond the period of forty days, and have often failed to reach it, abandoning their wagers on account of illness, or through madness, as was the case with Succi. And there is a still greater contrast with those poor sick folk, hysterical or neurotic, condemned to a life of inactivity and perpetually bedridden. Their skin rapidly becomes dried up and parchment-like; their corporal strength rapidly exhausted, and with the vigour of the body the light of the intellect, the memory, and the moral force of the will become likewise extinguished. Like somnolent mummies they become motionless and inert, beginning to sleep their eternal sleep.

Severity of the Church's judgement.—The deeply marked difference between the physiological characteristics of pathological abstinence and that of our saints is, however, not enough for the Church to declare the latter miraculous. She demands, in addition, rigorous moral proofs, and this is how, in the wake of Benedict XIV, she proceeds.

First of all, the reality of the fact and its circumstances are the object of a very severe medical and canonical inquiry: *promotores esse debent . . . admodum severos.* A solemn oath is required of all the witnesses, as well as from the faster himself. The examination covers not only the duration of the abstinence, but also its physical effects, of which the chief are: the preservation of physical and moral strength: *salvo hominis vigore;* then the absence of hunger though in perfect health: *non famelicum,* which is entirely beyond the law of nature.

The fact once verified, the examiners then pass to its cause, ascertaining first if the cause be not morbid: *Posita facti probatione, videndum erit an jejunium a morbo incoeperit.* But the absence of a pathological cause is still but a negative sign: the Church requires a positive sign; health. In fact, she does not conclude sanctity from the fast, but on the contrary it is from the sanctity of the faster that she concludes the sanctity of his fast: *Est sanctus, ergo miraculose abstinuit; non e contra: abstinuit, ergo sanctus est.* At this point inquiry is made into the heroic character of the virtues; also concerning the supernatural gifts of ecstasy, infused knowledge, and prophecy, for it may be said that these supernatural lights are the dominant note of stigmatization and ecstasy. This is the first positive sign.

The second is not, like the latter, *habitual,* but *actual.* With

what motive was this fast undertaken: *Qua de causa fuerit susceptum?* Was it through vanity or some other human motive, or under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and with full submission to obedience?

The third sign, which seems decisive, is that the faster has been sustained during his long fast solely by the Holy Eucharist: *Tunc jejunium erit inter miracula recensendum.* This sign contains, in fact, a twofold proof, both parts of which are determinate. Why, when material food is rejected with such atrocious pain, is the divine food alone acceptable? Why does natural hunger entirely disappear to give place to hunger for the Eucharist? On the other hand, how is a small particle of the consecrated species sufficient to replace normal food and drink, and to sustain human existence in full activity? For Benedict XIV requires that the faster has at least been able to carry out the duties of his state and all usual pious exercises: *An jejunans a ceteris piis operibus abstinuerit quae exercere tenebatur.*[1]

Miracle alone is able to respond to this twofold question in a way reasonable and satisfactory to the mind, at least to the mind that is not afflicted with incurable anti-religious monomania.

To the question of prolonged abstinence is closely related that of *insomnia*, which is its natural consequence. Since abstinence suspends nutrition of the body, it should also suspend the most active period for nutrition, which is sleep.

St Catherine of Siena hardly slept for half an hour every two days. St Colette was accustomed to sleep for only one hour every week; she even spent a whole year without sleeping. Agatha of the Cross remained without sleeping for the last eight years of her life. St Lydwine had only three hours of sleep in thirty years. Insomnia in our saints, then, is as wonderful as their abstinence; but as it is a natural result of this there is no need to treat it separately. In the same way that their supernatural abstinence seems to be an anticipation of the incorruptibility of glorified bodies, the state of perpetual vigil is a beginning of that blessed life which will know neither sleep nor decay.

Thus it is that the mystical ways, and especially ecstasy, free the soul from the servitude of animal life. The more

[1] *De canonisat. sanct.*, IV, 1st part, c. xxvii, n. 14.

it is nourished and inebriated by God, the more it becomes deified and begins here on earth to lead an angelic life, a prelude to the glorious life in heaven.

§ 6

Empire over creatures

Sovereignty over created beings is assuredly proper to the Creator, but it is *not a divine privilege that cannot be communicated.* Far from it; God loves to make the saints participate in it in the same measure that he communicates himself to them through mystical union. The gift of miracles is only an outward radiation of the interior deification of certain privileged souls.

The first, our Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the hypostatic union, enjoyed complete participation in this divine gift. It is this sign of his divine mission which he gives to those sent by St John the Baptist: "Art thou he that should come or look we for another? . . . Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them."[1]

Moreover, he tells his apostles that his power over nature comes to him from his union with God, and that his disciples who participate in this union will perform the same and even greater wonders by virtue of the same power: "Believe you not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? Otherwise believe for the very works' sake. Amen, amen I say to you, he that believeth in me, the same works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do: because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son."[2] It is not astonishing, then, that the greatest of our mystical saints have, in the same way, been most eminent thaumaturges, carrying out to the letter the same marvels as our Lord, and even greater.

Like Jesus on the Sea of Galilee they have commanded the waves of the sea, ruled the elements, calmed the tempests. St Francis Xavier, when he proceeded to Cochin-China on a Portuguese ship, was overtaken by a most terrible storm. After having exhorted the passengers to remain calm and to have confidence in God, he betook himself to prayer in his cabin,

[1] *Matt.* xi 5. [2] *Joan.* xiv 12-13.

then went up again on to the bridge, and, at the moment when the danger was greatest, asked the pilot for a plumb-line as used for sounding purposes. Then, full of faith, he threw it on the angry waves with a great sign of the cross; immediately the wind ceased and the ship was secured.

On land they have scattered or averted storms which threatened great disaster to the harvest, or caused beneficent rain to fall from the sky on the dried-up fields. Instances abound in the lives of St Philip Neri, Mère Agnès de Langeac, and a great number of saints. Often even they have made abundant springs burst out in barren and desolate places, which have transformed the soil. Whence so many springs and fountains which bear their names or are consecrated to them. Such, for instance, are the fountains of St Clement, Pope, St Venantius, St Julian of Le Mans, SS Primus and Felician, St Ethelburga, the Venerable Mère Agnès, and so on.

Their solicitude in procuring for men the necessities of life is a matter of history. Not only do their almsgivings, at times kingly, always generous, testify to this, but so also do the miracles which made up for their voluntary poverty. Like our divine Saviour at the marriage feast of Cana, they have changed the poor quality of the food, or, as he did in the desert, they have multiplied the supply when not sufficient to feed distressed and famished multitudes. St Dominic, having but one cup of wine, blessed it and gave thanks to God, then first drank of it himself, and afterwards passed it to his brethren, numbering twenty-five, who freely drank of it without the cup becoming diminished. It was then carried to the monastery of nuns, numbering one hundred and four, who were able freely to quench their thirst; nevertheless the cup was taken back to St Dominic still full.

Their faith and their charity have made flowers to blossom in mid-winter, fruits to ripen out of season, ravaged and sterile lands to be covered with abundant crops. At their prayer barren trees have withered like the fig-tree cursed by our Saviour, or else been made to shoot forth and flourish miraculously.

Their *power over wild animals* is no less marvellous than that exercised over the inanimate forces of nature. At the sight of martyrs, bearing visibly on their foreheads the mark of the living God, the most savage beasts have thrown themselves at their feet and licked them with respect; whilst flames have

curled back without burning them, and the wheels of the torture rack have splintered and flown into a thousand pieces. This last miracle is frequent in the Acts of the martyrs, as witness those of St Julian and companions, of SS Abdon and Sennen, of St Asterius, of St Catherine, and many others.

Whilst wild beasts, beneath the look or the touch of the saints, have become harmless and gentle, at other times they have been obedient to their voices like domestic animals. It might be thought that in them reappears that empire which innocent man, when he left the hands of the Creator, possessed and exercised over nature, and sin caused him to lose.

All creation seems to be at the bidding of these elect ones of God. The most touching examples have been given us by the lovable St Francis of Assisi, who chatted familiarly with all the animals, called them his brethren, and conversed pleasantly with them. Although his fame in this respect is incomparable, he was nevertheless not the only one gifted with this privilege.

One day when St Antony of Padua saw that his preaching was rejected by the heretics of Rimini, he went through divine inspiration to declare it to the fishes in the sea. Calling them by voice and gesture, he saw them come in shoals to the bank to listen to the word that men had rejected. He began to preach to them concerning the greatness of God who had created them. On hearing of this marvel all the inhabitants of Rimini hastened up, and understanding that the sermon to the fishes was meant for them, they listened submissively and were converted. These truly wonderful pages should be read in the Chronicle of the Friars Minor;[1] so also should be read once again the *Fioretti* of St Francis of Assisi, to relish anew all the charm and power of this gift of God.

Not only did animals obey the voices of the saints, but occasionally they anticipated their wishes and needs. Thus, the daily bread which St Paul, the first hermit, required for his food was brought to him each day by a raven, who even brought a double ration when St Antony visited him.

As may be seen, this wonderful empire exercised by our saints over animals is aimed at and indirectly reaches man himself: it is at bottom an *indirect empire over man* for the good of his body or of his soul. But the saints are also able to exercise the latter directly, and, indeed, this is their customary procedure.

[1] Bk. v, ch. xviii.

After the example of our Lord, they have first of all the power of casting out devils from the bodies of the possessed, as is testified throughout the whole course of history without exception until our own day. This dominion of Satan in the world has ever been the first object of their hatred and of their struggles. We have but to recall the history of the Apostle St Paul, of St Antony, St Bernard, St Philip Neri, and of many others down the course of ages until the Curé d'Ars in the midst of the nineteenth century.

Their prodigious struggles against the invasions of barbarians are also famous. Young virgins themselves were famous in this, such as St Geneviève, who, through the strength and prestige of her sanctity, repelled the hordes of Huns, commanded by Attila, far from Paris, and saved the capital from the horror of destruction. The miraculous cures which they performed are numberless, and it would be impossible to name any sickness or infirmity that proved refractory to the powerful efficacy of their prayers. Nor has the raising of the dead been the exclusive privilege of our Lord; from the prophet Elias until modern times the line of great thaumaturges has never died out.

But the radiation of the sanctity of our mystical heroes is above all spiritual, and it is by their *psychological and moral influence* that they have been benefactors to humanity.

This influence has been exercised around them by material wonders, some examples of which we have just given, but more often in a much less startling and more simple way. It is by the fervour of their prayers before God, by virtue of a supernatural word of which holiness has the secret, by a gesture or simple contact with the spiritually sick folk whom they have desired to heal; it is even by the sole virtue of their presence or their look that they have transfigured souls. An example of each of these will make them better understood. St Monica converted her son Augustine by the ardent prayers and the bitter tears which she poured out to the Heart of her God for many years. In the book of his *Confessions* St Augustine bears witness to this several times with insistence: "Thou heardest her, and despisedst not her tears, when streaming forth, they watered the earth beneath her eyes in every place of her prayer. . . . But wouldst thou, God of mercies, despise the humble and contrite heart of that chaste and sober widow? . . . Couldst thou despise and reject from

thine aid the tears of such an one, wherewith she begged of thee not gold or silver, nor any changeful or fleeting good, but the salvation of her son's soul ?"[1] No, it was impossible for a son of so many tears to perish !

It is this inward fervour in prayer, in contemplation, or in ecstasy, that gives supernatural virtue to the words of our saints, a value of which purely human speech, be it ever so literary and elegant, is always deprived. St Paul, moreover, disdained fine words and the eloquence of the learned, much preferring those bearing the imprint of the Spirit and power of God: *non in persuasibilibus humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in ostensione spiritus et virtutis.*[2]

This truth belongs to the number of those which we cannot well understand without having experienced them, but which, once experienced and understood, transform a soul and a life. Those of our own time who have had the joy of hearing the Curé d'Ars, Fr. Lacordaire, Fr. Ravignan, or Dom Bosco speak have, for the rest of their lives, retained a deep indelible impression of it which has no analogy at all with that produced by a talented orator or powerful genius. It is a vision of heaven or a voice from another world. It is no longer the word of a man, but the word of God.

Here is an instance of the marvellous efficacy of the word of a saint. We borrow it from the life of M. Olier. " When I was fortunate enough," writes a witness, " to hear M. Olier, our blessed Father, for five or six months I had been suffering from the most acute inward sorrow that it is possible to endure: opposition to God, thoughts against faith, temptations of every kind. In the midst of this frightful desolation I spoke to my confessor more by my tears than by my words, and all that he could say could not console me. . . . But as soon as I was with that holy man (M. Olier), he began to speak to me of the inner life of the Blessed Virgin and of the ways of honouring her. The things that he told me were so ravishing that all my sorrows passed away as he was speaking to me, just as if they had been removed by his hand and the peace and joy of the blessed had taken their place. This wholly heavenly peace flooded me with ineffable consolations, so that I entirely forgot my sorrows and withdrew from him without saying one word. I even remained for several months without remembering what it was that had so strangely tormented me, and since

[1] *Confess.*, III, c. xi; V, c. ix.
[2] 1 *Cor.* ii 4.

then I have no longer felt anything of it. . . . That which seemed to me most extraordinary is that our blessed Father had not spoken to me touching my troubles, yet I was freed from them at once. What I have just stated is so true that I would be ready to seal it with my blood."[1]

Such is the power of the word of a saint who, without answering questions or even having had them put to him, finds a means of satisfying all our desires and all our needs. This example enables us to see that words are not even necessary in order to bring about this marvel; a gesture, a look, an intention would be enough.

How often did the holy Curé d'Ars, after listening to confidences which cut him to the soul, answer not a word, but stop, join his hands, raise his eyes filled with tears to heaven, then lower them to those unhappy ones; and his look, full of blessing and heavenly hope, was enough to bring back to them peace of heart as well as strength and courage. This heavenly look was an endless source to which each one came to draw refreshment for his soul and renewed vigour. As the manna in the desert had the most varied tastes, so this look had most varied meanings responding to the most differing desires and satisfying the needs of each one.

At other times the saintly Curé dispelled most painful temptations of young men, or their thoughts of discouragement and despair, by merely taking their hands and placing them against his breast. An embrace on his heart was enough to inflame the pure souls of youths and to inspire them with the desire for the most lofty vocations.

Not only did his word and his look touch hearts and uplift souls, but his mere presence was enough. He was surrounded with a halo of sanctity, above all at church or at the altar while he assisted at or said Mass with such vivid faith and tender piety. Even in the streets when he passed it was an extraordinary sight. All heads were uncovered, all arms were stretched out towards him, all hearts beat on meeting him. All felt emotion at the contemplation of that physiognomy, at once so humble and so simple; that face emaciated by penance, transfigured with the ardour of love for God and man. He could not show himself anywhere without being followed by both rich and poor, the great ones and the people. It was a happiness to approach him, to touch the hem of his garment, or to make objects of piety touch them, thus to become relics

[1] Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, 4th ed., p. 288.

and beneficent relics; for it may be said of all the saints as of our Lord himself that there went out from them a secret power which cured every ill: *Virtus de illo exibat et sanabat omnes.*

There is nothing more reasonable than this visible radiation of sanctity, although it is essentially an inward gift and of itself invisible. " Neither," says the Gospel in fact, " do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house."[1]

Now the seven monumental branches of the mystical candlestick placed by God in the midst of the Church, to radiate on the whole world, are, as we have just explained, first of all in the intellectual order heavenly visions and prophecies, then divine ecstasy with the six marvellous complements of the affective, moral, and physical order with which we have just ended this study.

Such is the sacred fire of mystical charity which our Lord Jesus Christ came to bring down from heaven to earth in order to kindle it, as he expressly said: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?* Its warmth and its light, after having fostered the life of the infant Church, have sustained it in all its struggles throughout the ages, and will not fail to animate it to the end of time.

[1] *Matt.* v 15.

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

WE have been obliged, for the methodical course of this study, to explain separately the *essential* phenomenon of the mystical life—passive and infused contemplation, so different from active or ascetic contemplation—and its *accidental* phenomena, which are all or nearly all preternatural wonders, either intellectual, moral, or physical.

The analysis of these having come to an end, it remains for us to make a *synthesis* of them.

In the same way as, after having studied the distinction between substance and accidents, the philosopher asks himself whether they are separable, and seeks to discover the synthetic relationship of cause and effect between them in the unity of their being, so the theologian in an analogous research may ask himself whether the accidental mystical phenomena are completely separable from the essential phenomenon whence they spring.

And, first of all, can the marvellous outward phenomena exist *alone and separated from mystical contemplation?* Normally it is clear that they cannot, any more than accidents can normally exist apart from the substance from which they emanate. And although in the ordinary way this is not beyond the absolute power of God, who is able, if it please him, to give visions and ecstasies to a sinner whom he wishes to convert, as in the case of St Paul, or to make Balaam's ass speak and prophesy, nevertheless the truly marvellous phenomena observed in imperfect Christians or in those not yet raised to infused contemplation, will always be suspect of not being supernatural and divine. Thus, for instance, if stigmata occur apart from contemplation and ecstasy, the director would not need to pursue his inquiry, he would feel sure of being in the presence of either a human or diabolical counterfeit.

In the second place, *can contemplation exist alone* without any of the marvellous phenomena which we have described ? This is to ask if the cause always makes manifest the effects which it potentially contains. Evidently not, because all the conditions needed for their manifestation are not always found realized.

In the feeblest degrees of infused contemplation outward marvels are very rare; but let us not forget the inward marvels, no less wonderful, which we have already analysed in the wake of St Teresa and of St Thomas: these may be reduced to three chief heads.

1. *Experimental knowledge of the divine*, acquired by a quasi-angelic process, through infused species, without any abstraction from sensible images *in phantasmate*, as is required by the present state of our nature.

2. These infused species or divine touches produce an intuitive and objective sensation of the presence of God or of some supernatural object, and not merely a subjective or imaginative sense of presence.[1]

3. The divine action thus becomes tangible and conscious, though in the ordinary ways of grace it is always unconscious.

All these are marvels which still remain hidden inwardly, in the " centre " of the soul. But the *highest degrees* of infused contemplation and of mystical union once attained, are we to think that so noble a transformation of the human soul will not go on to sparkle outwardly in new marvels ? Can we suppose that so ardent a furnace of light and love cannot outwardly radiate in a divine manner ?

Generally speaking, no. For it is inconsistent that God should wish to bury his gifts and keep them hidden from the eyes of men. Moreover, it is for the good of all that he gives them to each one. The saints themselves would be deceived and troubled to see them used only for their own individual good instead of for that of all. In the providential design of him who distributes them, these gifts ought then, sooner or later, to flow outwardly, in more or less numerous marvels, and become visible and tangible for the greater glory of God and the greater good of his Church. But, according to the scholastic formula, they are already *in potentia* in the souls of our mystical saints.

We would, in fact, remark that there is *perfect continuity* without break or hiatus between the lowest degrees of infused contemplation and its most lofty radiance. From quiet to ecstasy and transforming union there is the same difference as between an inceptive action and one that is complete, between

[1] *In contemplatione Deus videtur per medium quod est lumen sapientiae* (*quasi species impressa rei visae*, ibid.) *mentem elevans ad cernenda divina, et sic per gratiam videtur a contemplante* (St Thomas, *De Veritate*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 4).

a germ and its final expansion, or an early dawn and full midday light. All the writings of St Teresa and of St John of the Cross clearly show this.

Now the essential characteristic of all these states, taken together, is that they are undoubtedly, and possibly wholly, " ultra-human," as St Thomas states, or " manifestly supernatural," as St Teresa equivalently says—that is, truly extraordinary, marvellous, and in a sense miraculous.

We would, however, observe that the word *miraculous* is applied by preference and strictly to the accessory phenomena of infused contemplation, such as visions, prophecies, and stigmata, rather than to contemplation itself. Although the latter is a withdrawal from the natural order, nevertheless, from another point of view, it is quite in order, relatively to a higher order, that of the mystical life. Contemplation, however, being doubly supernatural, first *quoad essentiam*, as the divine life of grace, then *quoad modum*, since conscious knowledge through infused species of the operations of grace is not the ordinary mode of grace, which is habitually unconscious, we should have some right to call it, as some have done, a miraculous mode of divine grace and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Without condemning this manner of speaking, we think it more exact to call infused contemplation an *extraordinary* mode of Christian life, but a *regular* and *constant* one. It is not then a miracle, essentially inconstant, nor an *ordinary* mode, if we understand by this word " that which belongs to the essence of a thing or to the integrity of its development," since it is possible to be very holy and even canonized without being a contemplative.

We see from this comprehensive view which embraces all mystical phenomena, essential or accidental, in their potential unity, and not merely from this or that internal or external aspect, that the mystical graces, which are above all graces of personal sanctification—*gratum facientes*, as theologians say—are also in addition and often gratuitous gifts, *gratis datae*, having also as their end the edification of the faithful and the general good of souls.[1] The mystical saints are not only saints or perfect, but they are furthermore *witnesses*, bringing us most

[1] *Gratia gratum faciens est per quam homo per seipsum Deo conjungitur, et gratis data per quam unus homo alteri ad salutem cooperatur. Et de hac dicit Apostolus*, 1 *ad Cor.* xii 7: *Unicuique datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem, sc. aliorum* (St Thomas, I-II, q. cxi, a. 1).

precious records from their explorations in far-off regions inaccessible to ordinary people.

They also with St John may say: "That which we have seen and heard and handled, we declare unto you."[1] And, like the beloved apostle, they may often confirm their testimony by visible marvels which astonish us and cause us to avow that "the finger of God is here."

Moreover, all the great mystics, from Moses to the prophets of the old law, from St Paul to St Francis Xavier, from St Francis of Assisi or St Teresa to the holy Curé d'Ars, have been "enlighteners" of the people, causing the superabundance of their contemplative lights to radiate around them. They have been "superhuman" beings, of whom St Thomas was able to say that though still men in the eyes of God, in the eyes of men they were gods: *Respectu Dei sunt homines, et respectu hominum, Dii*;[2] or as Mgr. Bertaud so eloquently said, "They are gods in flower."

In a word, they have been "saints to a miraculous degree" because they carried within them the living God, with whom they formed *but one spirit*, according to the forcible expression of the holy doctors,[3] and therefore *one same power*.[4]

Now such favours, which might have been thought to be incommunicable to ordinary mortals, can only be the lot of relatively rare privileged souls. Moreover, these form among the saints a *separate family*, all the members of which, in spite of profound divergences due to differences of time or country, resemble one another at least by a connecting link of spiritual relationship. All have moved in those passive and extraordinary ways which St Teresa calls a "short cut" in order to attain to sanctity; all, instead of walking laboriously on earth, on the rugged high road of Christian life, have received the singular favour of being raised to the sky and borne on mystical wings

[1] 1 *Joan.* i 3.

[2] *In III*, dist. xxv, q. 2, a. 1, sol. 4.

[3] "As far as can be understood, the soul, I mean the spirit of this soul, is made one with God" (St Teresa, *Castle*, 7th M., ch. ii). *Adhaerens Deo, unus cum eo spiritus fit* (St Bernard, *De diligendo Deo*, c. x, *initio*). It is the echo of the words of our Lord: *Ut sint unum sicut ego et te, Pater, unum sumus* (*Joan.* xvii 22), and of St Paul: *Ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus* (1 *Cor.* xv 28).

[4] "Doubtless, by its becoming one with the Almighty, by this sovereign union of spirit with spirit, the soul must gather strength" (*Castle*, 7th M., ch. iv). "Then the soul becomes mistress of all the elements and of the world itself" (*Way*, ch. xx).

into superhuman and quasi-angelic regions. They have become rivals of the angels.[1]

Far be it from us, however, to wish to establish an absolute *separation*, a break as it were between the ascetic and mystical states. In spite of their fundamental distinction, which we have been at pains to establish, because certain writers seem to us to fail to recognize it or to leave it too much in the shade, their *continuity*, as we have already pointed out, is none the less forcibly impressed upon us.

First of all for this general reason, as before stated, that there is, in spite of their specific diversity, in the hierarchical scale of all created beings a marvellous continuity, the highest degree of the lower species touching the lowest degree of the higher species, to such an extent that the feebleness of our gaze or knowledge occasionally runs the risk of confusing them. We have even pointed out that the complete passiveness which distinguishes the mystical sensation of the divine was but a *borderline case* of that greater or lesser but unconscious passivity which characterizes the ordinary action of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, continuity is imposed for certain particular reasons which may be reduced to the following three heads:

1. The two kinds of spiritual life being dominated by the same end, by the same ideal of Christian perfection, which is union of the soul with God through charity and the full expansion of that charity, notwithstanding the diversity of ascetic or mystical means, they form together a continuous doctrine, a perfect unity.

2. The active life of asceticism being a preparation normally required for the passive life of infused contemplation, although it is not enough of its own power to attain to it, there is between them the close relationship of a means to an end, and therefore veritable continuity. The contemplative life normally reacts in turn on the active life, renders it more intense and more fruitful, above all in apostolic works. There is then a reciprocal influence and an intimate union between them.

3. Not only is there union between them, but again there is actual *interpenetration*. In fact, the exercise of the virtues does not cease with the contemplative; on the contrary, it becomes much more perfect, because infused contemplation is

[1] *Et ideo dicitur* (*Adam et contemplativus*) *sicut alter angelus* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 12).

the most powerful and at the same time the easiest means of practising the most heroic virtues.

It is in this sense that St Teresa reminds those of her daughters who had experienced the sweetness of passive contemplation that they must constantly return to the exercise of the active virtues. "Among all the states of prayer," she tells us, "however high they may be, there is not one in which it is not often necessary to go back to the beginning."[1]

Mysticism is not, then, separate from asceticism as though it were able to live alone, in "splendid isolation." But without becoming separated they are clearly distinguished, at least in theory. In practice, no doubt, there occur cases in which the distinction is very difficult to grasp, at least in the lower degrees, and the director may find himself between two opposite dangers: of causing the active ways to be left either too soon or else too late. If too soon, there is the danger of producing false mystics and visionaries; if too late, he may paralyse grace and cause souls to suffer. A clear grasp of the theoretical principles which we have tried to lay down is alone able to guide him in so embarrassing a decision.

The *first conclusion* to be gathered from this synthesis is that by infused contemplation man is truly raised to a quasi-angelic state, in accordance with St Thomas's expressive formula: *Et ideo dicitur sicut alter angelus*,[2] and instead of comparing the ascetic state, as do some writers, to infancy and the mystical state to adolescence or to ripe age, as though infused contemplation were the inevitable growth and normal expansion of the same life, it would be much more correct to compare them, in accordance with St Teresa—although no comparison should be pushed too far, according to the adage *omnis comparatio claudat*—to the metamorphosis of the silk-worm into the butterfly.[3] The first creeps laboriously on earth, the second flies with white and shining wings. They are no longer thought of as the same, so different is their life; whereas the child is easily recognized in the youth or the grown man. In the latter there is merely progress, a development in the same kind of life, in which there is nothing marvellous; in the former there is a veritable metamorphosis or change of life which appears to be marvellous; a striking image of man transformed into an angel and of a human or abstract

[1] *Life*, ch. xiii. [2] *De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 12.
[3] *Castle*, 5th M., ch. ii.

knowledge of God transformed into an experimental knowledge through the infusion of impressed species or divine touches.

The human soul is made to walk laboriously on the earth in this life of trial and combat, and not to fly freely in the sky: no one can claim to possess wings at this or that age; the greater number die without possessing them, although very advanced in perfection, whilst many have wings and fly from the childhood of their Christian life. Mystical wings are, at every age, not the rule but the exception.

The ascetical mode, then, is the *human mode*, normally adapted to our present faculties. It is brought about by the infused virtues and the ordinary inspirations of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, without any infused species in the knowledge, without any passively infused love in the will. The mystical mode, on the contrary, is a quite new and *superhuman mode* of the same gifts, dispensing the mind from laborious abstractive operations, since the soul is thereby furnished with infused species, and also dispensing the will from similar difficult effort by providing its heart with wings.

Here, according to another comparison familiar to St Teresa, the beneficent and fruitful rain falls of itself on the ground, without the gardener having any need of bringing water in great supply either by hand, or by water-wheels or canals.[1]

In truth these are two different lives, not the normal development of one same life. The one is the earthly life, the other the life of heaven in anticipation; moreover, infused contemplation has seemed to all the mystical saints like a privileged foretaste of heaven.[2]

Mysticism is then, as to its object, a science wholly heavenly, wholly supernatural; but whilst its lofty head is raised to lose itself in the infinite splendours of the skies, its feet rest firmly on solid ground, and this is the *second conclusion* which must spring from this study.

[1] *Life*, ch. xi, xiv, xviii.

[2] We admit that the explanation of the passage from asceticism to mysticism by simple *growth* would be less unlikely on the hypothesis that the normal ways of mysticism do not pass beyond that of quiet. But this hypothesis, which only one contemporary writer—as far as we know—has ventured to maintain, does not seem to us tenable, because it suppresses from mysticism, in an arbitrary way, the regular ascents of St Teresa's last three Mansions (union, ecstasy, marriage). If these three Mansions are restored to their place, and they are the most wonderful in mysticism, it is obvious that the explanation by *metamorphosis* greatly outweighs in exactitude that of simple *growth*.

Mystical theology, as we have just seen, does not fear, any more than does traditional philosophy, that of Aristotle and of St Thomas, to be subject to the *control of experience*. Far from being an *a priori* creation of theology, it prides itself that it takes as its basis psychological facts that are certain and duly verified, and we have seen the Venerable Luis de Ponte declaring, in accordance with Gerson, that it is an " experimental science."

But merely to draw up empirical descriptions and to classify observed facts is not enough to satisfy either legitimate human curiosity or the requirements of true science. We must, also and above all, endeavour to explain and understand them. Thus the mystics belonging to the *descriptive school* have only prepared the way and provided material for mystics of the *speculative school*, who have, through the truths of Christian faith and a sane philosophy, enlightened these data of experience by grouping them together into a vast and expressive synthesis. Then only have the facts begun to be understood, and rules of conduct, at first empirical and provisional, been determined and become rational principles of direction.

Furthermore, this lofty synthesis of mystical facts, based on revelation and the word of God, has given mystical theology a pre-eminence over all the purely natural sciences with which it is associated, or from which it has sought aid and light, as, for instance, that of psycho-physiology. Their conjunction, so desirable and even so necessary, in no way implies that they have equal rights or authority.

Doubtless, facts are of the first importance, and nobody, not even the theologian, has the right to deny them. But the more or less hypothetical explanations of psycho-physiologists and naturalistic scholars must be controlled, completed, and, if need be, replaced by explanations due to a higher knowledge, possessed of greater light, that of sacred science. Revealed theology, from its very nature, is independent of human science: in all controversy it has the last word.

After having sought everywhere on earth the secret of certain enigmas without success, the scholar, if he be truly wise, calling to mind that all truth comes from God as its first source, no longer fears to humble himself by having recourse to enlightenment from him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Thus do the lights of human knowledge and the invincible authority of divine faith become united and harmonized in the noble and wonderful synthesis of mystical theology.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Concerning Non-Christian Mystics

THIS work has to do only with Christian mysticism. Nevertheless, it is well to note in ending that, in the course of ages, attempts at purely natural mysticism have been met with, which are a kind of counterfeit of it.

There is nothing astonishing in this. In the presence of the infinite mystery which on every side surrounds and overwhelms it, the heart of man, if it be intelligent, experiences acute unrest. In the deep sense of his need, his impotence in regard to all created reality, the inadequacy of all happiness here on earth to satisfy him, he aspires with an irrepressible impulse towards his immortal destiny, towards the supreme Good, the perfect Truth, the essential Beauty, and towards eternity.

There is then in the universal instinct of humanity a natural tendency—*desiderium naturale*, says St Thomas[1]—towards the beyond and even towards the knowledge and vision of the invisible, which for us is the divine Being. So natural is it for him who has seen an effect to desire to see also its cause, and therefore to see the Cause of causes, even when this sight is deprived of the supernatural and transcendent modes which grace alone is able to reveal to us and make us reach.

Aristotle himself, pagan as he was, made the vision of God, *τὸν Θεὸν θεωρεῖν*,[2] the last end of man; Plato, in the immortal pages of his *Phaedrus* and *Banquet*, has proclaimed it as an incomparable ideal, and the neo-platonists, with regrettable exaggeration, aspired to it even in this present life.

This aspiration of the human heart is all the more unconquerable in that reflective reason, even more clearly than spontaneous reason, assures us that this beyond is not nothingness, that this invisible is not an idle fancy, but rather the essential reality whence are derived all other realities, and to which every people has given the name God.

[1] *Ex hac cognitione* (*indirecta*) *non quiescit naturale desiderium, sed incitatur magis ad divinam substantiam videndam* (St Thomas, *Contra Gent.*, III, c. 1. Cf. *De Verit.*, q. x, a. 2).

[2] Aristotle, *Mor. Fud.*, VII, ch. xv, § 16; *Mor. Nicom.*, i and x; *Metaph.*, xiii.

On the other hand, the whole of our natural relationship with this superior and divine Being, or natural religion, in no way suffices to satisfy our minds any more than it does our hearts, which yearn and seek for a less obscure knowledge of this God, and for more direct and intimate relations with him. From this natural need have arisen divers philosophical mysticisms of human invention. Like so many wild trees the branches of which have not been grafted by divine grace; so many human efforts incurably vitiated and sterilised by naturalism or the Pelagian heresy.

There was the Chinese mysticism of Chuang-Tzu, an Indian mysticism—several even—a Buddhist mysticism, and others among the Persians, the Arabs, the ancient and modern theosophists both in the East and West,[1] but above all there was a neo-platonic mysticism, with Plotinus and Proclus, which had the greatest influence in the West. All these have this in common, that they are more or less pantheistic, having as their end not only *union* but *fusion* with the divinity, and personal annihilation in its depth. Moreover, this end is not a purely gratuitous gift of God, as with Christians, but the result of man's voluntary efforts, with the help of certain more or less superstitious practices. Each of them seeks, or even claims to have discovered, certain magical or cabalistic *recipes* which raise us little by little to the intuition of God and to ecstasy.[2] These secrets form the object of mysterious initiations.

There is then an essential difference between Christian mysticism and natural mysticisms, not only as regards their origin, but also as regards their final end and the means by which it is reached. Here, for instance, are the four recipes of Hindu Yogi by which to attain to ecstasy: (1) To repeat for an indefinite period the same word, above all the name of God (Mantra-Yoga); (2) to concentrate for a long time on one same object, especially some brilliant object (Laya-Yoga); (3) gradually to suspend respiration (Raja-Yoga); (4) to fix the eyes and bodily postures for a very prolonged time (Hatha-Yoga). From these practices should result first the silence of

[1] A short history of contemporary theosophical societies may be seen in the *Nouvelles religieuses*, number for September 1, 1919; *À propos de la condamnation de la théosophie par le Saint-Office*, published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, August 1, 1919, p. 317. These new theosophists are becoming more and more changed into a humanitarian pantheism or " anthroposophy " of which they have taken the name.

[2] Cf. *Christus, Manuel de l'histoire des religions* (Beauchesne, 1911).

the soul, then an unconsciousness which, to the eyes of the ignorant, is made to pass for an ecstasy, for fusion with the universal soul of the world, in which unconsciousness takes the place of the consciousness of true ecstatics. It is the same with the physical exercises enjoined on the Mussulman dervishes. Both the turning or *dancing* dervishes and the *howling* dervishes are noticeable examples of these exhausting gymnastics, ending in vertigo, hysterical inebriation, anæsthesia, and unconsciousness. It is certainly difficult to conceive of a more clumsy counterfeit of Christian mysticism. How have serious minds been able to imagine that it would be possible to attain to God by such purely mechanical and ridiculous means? They only lead to nothingness or the Buddhist nirvana.

Nevertheless, we would not maintain that natural mystics, who have a reasonable ideal of perfection and one conformable to a sane philosophy, are lacking in all moral and religious value, or that they cannot have a beneficent influence in bringing peace to the human soul, or the purification and uplifting of life. Taken together and looked upon from outside, they may even possess certain points of resemblance with Christian mysticism, which would account for all that is good in them. Thus Mussulman mysticism, as M. Carra de Vaux has so well shown,[1] has borrowed a number of details from that of Christianity. As regards mystics chronologically earlier than Christianity, we cannot deny that very wholesome practices are occasionally to be found in them, inspired by the eternal data of moral philosophy.

There are, for instance, to be found in them a need for retirement from the world, solitude and silence, curtailment of the pleasures of sense, painful purification of the soul, the seeking for a superterrèstrial ideal, a striving for illumination of the mind by meditating on the beauties of nature and the greatness of God, and even, without reasoning, by an effort at intuition, inevitably ineffective, it is true, without the grace of God, and ending only in extreme psychological tension, without other possible effect than lapsing into unconsciousness.

Moreover, the diligent contemplation of the infinite misery of man compared with the infinite sanctity of the Most High, the sight of these two unfathomable abysses, which has staggered the most powerful geniuses, may cause them to make use of apparently contradictory or agnostic expressions

[1] Carra de Vaux, *Gazali*, p. 182. The Mussulman Sufi aspires to union with the " one and personal " God.

in order to interpret such ineffable contrasts; expressions which are also to be found among our own mystics. Such expressions as *divine darkness, obscure light, visible darkness, fruitful nothingness, painful joy*, and so on. All those who have the least experience of mystical phenomena find it easy to invent such words as these, which Dionysius the Mystic, had he not found them for himself, might have borrowed from the famous terminology of Plotinus and Proclus.

Not only have they metaphorical or symbolical expressions in common, but also aspirations, prayers, outpourings in the face of the infinite mystery, which are almost identical. Dionysius had only to add the Christian note as though to transpose the same melody.

Let it even be admitted that the borrowing is indisputable. It only shows, once again, that the transcendence of Christian mysticism—like that of Christianity in general—does not consist in denying nature or in stifling it, but in raising it in order to transform it and magnificently surpass it, by grafting the supernatural on to the natural and universal needs of man. The light of reason and the yearnings of the human heart are so many stepping-stones in the supernatural and Christian building.[1]

These natural mystics, in spite of the good elements which they may occasionally possess, remain none the less deprived of the wings of grace and of the divine call, and, being reduced to purely human effort, they are incapable of attaining to the intuition of and to close union with the true God. They are, moreover, quite powerless to enrich philosophical knowledge with supernatural enlightenment, as does the Christian mystic, and still less able to deify souls by supernatural faith and charity in order to make them live the very life of God. Not one of them has ever been able to repeat the words of St Paul: *Vivo jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.* Whence their lamentable lack of fruitfulness and the smallness of their social influence, as history has shown.

May we go still further and grant, at least in exceptional cases, that among souls living in good faith outside the Catholic Church—in schism or even in paganism, always provided that they possess elementary faith in the truths necessary for

[1] *Cf.* De Broglie, *Religion et Critique*, pp. 131 *ff.*; *Problèmes et conclusions de l'histoire des religions*, 2nd ed., pp. 249 *ff.* (points of resemblance and of difference between Christian and non-Christian asceticism).

the means; such as the existence of one only God, personal and providential—God is able of his infinite goodness to raise certain of these to at least an inferior and rudimentary truly supernatural mystical state ?

This, though extraordinary, seems to us to be in no way impossible. In order to be convinced of it, it is enough to call to mind the classical thesis concerning the possibility of miracles being wrought by God in favour of pagans or those living in good faith outside the true Church.[1]

No doubt in practice it is necessary to be distrustful in this matter, in which illusions, or the intervention of diabolical deceits, are so easy; but in principle, the fact, although supernatural, has nothing in it that is improbable. This intercourse between the Creator and his humble creature, however close it may be, does not surpass either his almighty power or his merciful goodness, and God may have reasons for thus rewarding the goodwill and virtues of certain privileged souls.

In a famous document of August 10, 1863,[2] in which indifferentism is condemned, Pius IX very clearly assumes this teaching as admitted.

But here we depart from the question of purely natural mystics to come back, in a roundabout way, to true supernatural and Christian mysticism, since these privileged souls belong, if not to the visible body, yet at least to the invisible soul of holy Church.

APPENDIX II

Letter of Benedict XIV to Fr. Catalayud

Dilecto filio sacerdoti Vincentio Catalayud Ecclesiae Metropolitanae Valentinae Preposito.

Valentiam in Hispania Tarraconensi.

Benedictus PP. XIV. Dilecte Fili, Salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Tria exemplaria tui operis typis editi accepimus, una litteris ad nos datis die 19 Decembris anni praeteriti 1750. Alterum ex dictis exemplaribus in nostra privata bibliotheca reposuimus, alterum consignavimus Patri Generali Dominicanae Religionis, ut illud collocaret in celebri publica biblio-

[1] St Thomas, *Q. disp., De Pot.*, q. vi, a. 5, ad 5; St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, X, c. xxvi.

[2] Cf. *Enchiridion* (10th ed.), no. 1677.

theca exstructa in ipsius coenobio a bonae memoriae Cardinali Casanatae; tertium dabimus Patribus Congregationis Oratorii Sti. Philippi Nerii, qui in suis aedibus amplam et selectis operibus tum editis tum ineditis bibliothecam possident; qua praecipue usus est Venerabilis Cardinalis Caesar Baronius in Annalium Ecclesiae compilatione. Amplas tibi dilecte fili reddimus gratias pro munere ad nos transmisso, et amplissimas reddimus de tertio volumine, quod Nobis immerentibus dedicasti. Cum Nobis datum erit, innumeris enim obruimur negotiis, aliquarum horarum spatio in nostra privata bibliotheca commorari, tuos labores avide percurremus, non dubitamus eos a Nobis approbandos et laudandos esse cum auctoritate Sancti Thomae Aquinatis innixi sint. Porro, in eo quod attinet ad nonnullorum miraculorum indolem, in cujus explicatione a nostris scriptis recessisti, nec tibi nec Nobis grave esse debet. In iis quae scribimus uti privati doctores scimus nos falli posse, nec etiam dubitamus Nos aliquando, etsi inadvertentes, a veritate recessisse. In iis onus est aliorum scripta nostra refellere, corrigere et emendare; et irrationabiles profecto essemus si in his tristaremur, cum divina assistentia pro infallibilitate promissa sit Summo Pontifici, sed ex Cathedra loquenti. Cum alii pro complemento operis supersint tomi, cum poteris, eos ede, ut opus sit undequaque perfectum; teque, licet absentes, plenis ulnis amplectentes, apostolicam tibi benedictionem peramanter impertimus.

Datum Romae, apud Sanctam Mariam Majorem, die 27 Maii 1751. Pontificatus nostri anno undecimo.

APPENDIX III

Reply to the "Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique"

The way in which the mystical question should be propounded

Quite recently the ascetic and mystical Reviews have complained of the terminological ambiguity in which mystical questions seem to be involved, and this complaint has reached as far as the daily papers, such as the *Libre Parole* (December 22, 1922, and January 5, 1923), which is a proof of the general uneasiness. Everyone desires final enlightenment to be thrown on such exciting subjects, for so thickly befogged an atmosphere becomes impossible to live in.

In our turn we have had to complain of serious ambiguity of another kind, respecting the actual *putting* of the question, in which certain writers—those who claim to reform the classical teaching of the last three centuries—seem to persist as though from their point of view there was but one way of propounding the question, and all others must be excluded *a priori*, without discussion.

I

It is not that the first-named ambiguities, those which are concerned with terminology, seem to us to be negligible. Far from it. The words *mysticism* and *contemplation* themselves ought never to be made use of without stating whether they are to be taken in a very wide, a wide, a strict or very strict sense. Thus when St Thomas applies the word contemplation to simple *prayer*, in which it is of course possible to perceive as it were the germs of admiration and contemplation, the context itself shows his thought clearly enough—for instance, when he declares it of *precept* and obligatory for salvation[1], or enumerates its divisions, *reading*, *meditation* and *prayer*.

Nevertheless we think that those greatly exaggerate who maintain, as has been done, that we are merely divided by a question of words, and that if we were clearly to define words we should easily come to an understanding. In our opinion this is not the case at all, and we believe that we are divided above all on a question of ideas, or, if preferred, by different points of view, that is to say, by the different and even contrary manner of propounding certain questions.

The proof of this is that we already had an established terminology—at least in its essential features—and one that had become classical, especially since the time of Benedict XIV. And all those who have studied the masterly work of this learned Pope have been struck by the clearness with which he distinguished and defined, for instance, *infused* and *acquired* contemplation.

Why then have certain writers overturned and thrown aside

[1] *Omnis christianus qui in statu salutis est, oportet quod aliquid de contemplatione participet, cum praeceptum sit omnibus : Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus, ad quod etiam est tertium praeceptum legis* (*In III*, dist. xxxvi, q. 1, a. 3, ad 5). *Partes contemplationis sunt tres ; sc. lectio, meditatio et oratio* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 3, ad 4; *In IV*, dist. xv, q. 4, a. 1; q. 2, 1).

this terminology? It is because, having changed the ideas and theories, they were obliged to change the terms which express them. Whence comes the perpetual conflict between the ancient terminology and the new, and the confusion of which complaint is made.

Once we return to the theories consecrated by Benedict XIV, and consequently to his terminology, confusion immediately disappears.

This is in fact because a scientific terminology is the result of knowledge already obtained, not its starting-point. It is produced at the end, and is completed as the knowledge develops. Moreover it is, as it were, the analytical expression of its theories, their reduction into elementary formulas.

Behind "verbal" definitions there often lie hidden definitions of ideas. That is why we are unable to accept several "verbal" definitions suggested by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange (*Vie spirituelle*, November, 1921), because they assume or require certain theories which we are unable to grant.

I am quite willing to state that "I call a cat a cat"; but if I am asked to add, "and Rollet a rascal," then I excuse myself, for in accepting this "verbal" definition I am prevented, for the future, from maintaining that "Rollet is *not* a rascal."

In the same way, by accepting the suggested definition of infused contemplation by the mere *predominance of the Gifts*, or of certain Gifts, I am prevented afterwards from maintaining that it is something quite different.

It is useless to show in detail that many other proposed definitions also imply a theory, a preconceived system. One instance suffices.

The one cited certainly shows the vigour of its author's mind, the strictness of his logic, and the solid framework of his system. All these great qualities are already known to us, and more than once we have had the pleasure of rendering homage to them.

We only beg the author to revise his *starting-point*. It is in this that the greater part of the best constructed systems are at fault. Ought the question of infused contemplation to be propounded *a priori*, starting from St Thomas's theory of the nature of the virtues and gifts—even more, from a doubtful interpretation of this theory—or rather, on the contrary, propounded *a posteriori*, beginning from the facts declared by the mystical saints themselves? Of these two points of view, which is the only true and legitimate one?

II

The great question in mysticism which dominates all others is not to know if there be certain contemplative states characterized by the *predominance, in different degrees, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit*, in which the soul is more *passive* than *active*, and necessary for the highest sanctity—we all grant this—but to know if there are not, side by side with and above them, other very different contemplative states characterized by a new element, *wholly passive*, in which " it is God who does all," in which grace is no longer only *co-operating*, or *operating with us*, but *operating alone*,[1] at least for some rapid moments during which this divine touch, *wholly passive*, soon becomes the powerful mainspring of still more generous and meritorious vital acts.

Now we believe that the answer to this fundamental question is the outcome of the most close psychological observation, and not at all of *a priori* reasoning as to the nature of the virtues and gifts. It is necessary, then, to have recourse to the direct or indirect testimony of the mystical saints who have experienced these states, setting aside with care all the vague replies of those who had no intention of answering the question or who had no idea even of asking it—these negative testimonies which are so vaunted do not even count—and retaining, on the other hand, the depositions of those who have appreciated the question and have wished to reply to it; those who have clearly stated this experimental distinction.

Now these are legion, and their witness, elsewhere stated, is known to all mystical theologians. Let us recall, at least very briefly, two or three of the most remarkable specimens of them.

It is from St Teresa that we have this grand expression which so well characterizes infused contemplation, " Here it is God who does all " (*Way*, ch. xxvii, etc.); and this other expression, " In mystical theology—of which I spoke before—the understanding ceases from its acts [after the ordinary manner], because God suspends it. . . . He puts before it [other species] which astonish and occupy it; so that, without making any reflections, it shall comprehend in a moment more than we could comprehend in many years with all the efforts in the world " (*Life*, ch. xii).

[1] *Cf.* St Thomas, I, q. lxiii, a. 5; I-II, q. ix, a. 6, ad 3; q. lxviii, a. 2; and q. cxi, a. 2; q. xxxiv, a. 3.

St John of the Cross, whose theological knowledge renders his witness still more authoritative, speaking again of infused contemplation, as opposed to that which is acquired, thus describes it: " To contemplate is to receive ": *La contemplacion pura consiste en recibir* (*Living Flame*, st. iii, § 7). And to receive what ? In the " apex of the spirit " it is to receive the " touch of the understanding " in which God impresses (*species impressa*) a " pure knowledge without image," and in the heart the touch of pure love, as the Saint so often repeats.[1] That is why Benedict XIV, when codifying what, as he remarked, had become the common teaching of theologians, specified that *infused* contemplation was distinguished from *acquired* by the appearance of new knowledge, and therefore by the infusion of *impressed species*, which reveal to us either new aspects of things already known, or else things wholly new (were it only the *fact* of the presence of a special operation of God's grace in our souls) . . . *per infusam vero* (*contemplationem*) *Deus non solum ea ostendit quae antea fuerant credita, sed vel ea ostendit cum novissimis circumstantiis et perfectionibus, vel nova objecta revelat, novas eorum species infundendo.*[2] The revelation, or inward inspiration, by means of *impressed species*, is also, according to St Thomas, the degree of contemplation intermediate between the contemplation of God in his essence, *ut habuit Paulus*, and the ordinary contemplation of him in the mirror of sensible creatures, and it is this which characterizes mystical contemplation. We have quoted conclusive texts.[3] It is also this same intermediate contemplation of God which the holy doctor attributes to Adam in a state of innocence: *Homo, in statu innocentiae ad aliquod medium pervenit . . . ut notitiam*

[1] " On the other hand, the receptive passion of the understanding can only receive knowledge purely and passively—and this only when it has been purified—therefore previous to purgation the soul feels less frequently the touch of knowledge than the passion of love " (*Dark Night*, bk. ii, ch. xiii). " The light that is to be given to [the soul] is a certain divine light of the highest nature, surpassing all natural light, and not naturally cognizable by the understanding " (*Dark Night*, bk. ii, ch. ix).

[2] *De Servorum Dei beatificatione*, l. iii, ch. xxvi, no. 7.

[3] The second mode of contemplation (by impressed species), says St Thomas, " natural to the angels and supernatural to man, appeared among contemplatives *judged worthy of these revelations of God*, which the first man in a state of innocence enjoyed still more" (cf. *In II*, dist. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1). It should be noted that God always reveals in this something new, at least his presence and his action in the soul, and occasionally truths of which this action is the expression or sign.

Dei acciperet non ex sensibilibus creaturis sed revelatione interna (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 5, ad 10).

And elsewhere in a still more precise way: *Indigebat* (Adam) DUPLICI MEDIO, *scilicet medio quod est similitudo Dei* (species impressa) *et quod est elevans vel dirigens mentem* (lumen) (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, c). *Indigebat* (Adam) *medio quod est species rei visae quia per aliquod spirituale lumen menti hominis infusum divinitus, quod erat quasi similitudo expressa Lucis increatae, Deum videbat* (*ibid.*). The *lumen* then is no longer sufficient for infused contemplation without *the species impressa*, as for all the visual sensations.

According to Benedict XIV, as also to St Thomas, infused contemplation, then, is *contemplation by infused impressed species*. Among all those signs he gives which characterize it this is the most striking. It succeeds in making us entirely passive beneath the divine touch: we receive a *ready-made* concept, a *ready-made* love, which by reaction incites the vital act of loving contemplation of God.

Without this test never will any other be found, for a difference of *degree*, impossible to grasp, is no longer a test. And the epithet *infused* is no less applicable to the lower degrees of a grace than to the higher. Now the absence of a test logically leads to a confusion between the two contemplations, infused and acquired, as M. Saudreau would wish. It is from his point of view the only logical position, but it is untenable. Far from being new, as is alleged of it, this teaching is but the precise statement in scholastic terms of the most ancient tradition.

In order to be brief, in so short an article, let us go back at once as far as the twelfth century, to the great mystic Richard of St Victor. " There are," he says, " three kinds of contemplation: one active, the other passive, the third mixed. The first is due to human labour only (this is philosophical contemplation), the second to the action of God alone (this is infused contemplation), the third is a blending of the two operations of man and God (this is active or acquired contemplation). *Primus modus contemplationis surgit ex industria humana ; tertius ex sola gratia divina ; medius autem ex utriusque permixtione, humanae sc. industriae et gratiae divinae* (*Benjamin Minor*, bk. v, c. i; *P. L.* vol. cxcvi, col. 170).

The exclusion by all our opponents of the mode of contemplation characterized by a *wholly passive* element is not justified, then, either by the experience of the mystical saints or by tradition, both of which are against it.

What then is the theological prejudice which has caused it to be fixed at the starting-point as though it were an undisputed first principle ?

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, at the end of his article of January, 1922, p. 270, has had the frankness to admit this, for which we thank him. Far from saying of this appendix "*in cauda venenum*," we find in it, on the contrary, the wished-for antidote as well as a hope of understanding and agreement.

The writer starts from the theory of St Thomas concerning the nature of the virtues and the gifts, or rather from an interpretation of this theory which is rejected by so excellent a Thomist as Cardinal Billot. He reasons thus:

Admitted by all that the ordinary exercise of the gifts is a close blend of divine and human activity, in which that of God is always more or less predominant, it seems that there can only be *degrees* in this blending, for if ever there were total passiveness therein, the *mode* or very *nature* of the gifts would be changed. Therefore an element of total passiveness appears to him to be impossible. Were we to admit it, he seems to say, our "*poor human formula*" would fall to pieces. Here we have a case of *a priori* caught in the very act. "It is clear," he says, "that each of the gifts cannot have two distinct *modes*, distinct not only in *degree* but in *nature ;* there would then be two *habitus*, specifically distinct, and the first would become developed in vain, it would never reach the second." Cardinal Billot, on the contrary, finds no difficulty in admitting not only different *degrees* but different *modes* in the exercise of the gifts: the one *ordinary*, the other *extraordinary* and preternatural. In fact, since the gift is a *docility* or *suppleness* beneath the action of actual grace, this grace can have divers modes without the nature of the gift being changed thereby: it still remains a *docility* to the action of God.

This is our view also, and we admit, as does the Cardinal,[1] that mystical or infused contemplation is in its essence not only an eminent, but yet more, an extraordinary operation of the

[1] Alius est *modus*, isque plane *extraordinarius*, qui etsi ad sublimem etiam sanctitatem nequaquam necessarius dicendus est, ut plurimum tamen . . . invenitur . . . in oratione *quietis, unionis simplicis, unionis exstaticae, et unionis consummatae*, quae omnes sub nomine generico contemplationis *infusae* veniunt. . . . Hic igitur Spiritus Sanctus . . . sua operatione immediata *species ipsas in mente imprimit* . . . etc. (Card. Billot, *De virtutibus infusis*, p. 185, ed. 1901). He cites by way of support Fr. Meynard, O.P., Vallgornera, St Thomas, Dionysius the Carthusian, etc.

gifts of the Holy Ghost, and this from the first degree of Quiet, as St Teresa clearly stated. Consequently all which is below this degree belongs, according to our theory, to ordinary or acquired contemplation, and to the domain of asceticism. So that our mysticism starts almost where that of M. Saudreau ends—that is to say, at the unfolding of the five spiritual senses or impressed species, beginning with the most obscure senses, or the *Great Darkness*.

At the end of his appendix the writer makes a still more interesting concession. He recognizes that, without contradicting the theology of St Thomas, an *extraordinary mode* in the exercise of the gifts may be admitted " when it is accompanied by the graces *gratis datae*, for the benefit of one's neighbour, such as the grace known as *sermo sapientiae* " (the gift of eloquence of wisdom).

Even more, he grants (pp. 166 and 245) that certain " *internal words* " might also be called a " special and extraordinary favour, though one enjoined not for the benefit of one's neighbour but for the sanctification of the soul." Good ! But the *internal words* being *infused impressed species* of the spiritual sense of hearing, are they not on the same footing as the other infused impressed species of the other spiritual senses ? Thus we shall end by being in agreement with the writer that from the appearance of *infused contemplation by infused species*—more or less confused or clear, it matters little—the gifts of the Holy Ghost are exercised by a difference not of degree, but of *mode*. *This contradicts his starting-point*, where this is declared to be impossible.

So that, if the reader is willing, with Benedict XIV and Cardinal Billot, to admit this starting-point, wholly opposed to that of Fr. Lagrange—namely, that infused contemplation is characterized not by a *degree* or predominance of the gifts, but by an extraordinary *mode*—he will have no difficulty in arriving at deductions equally opposed to those of that writer. Here is the chief of these:

If infused contemplation is characterized by a new extraordinary and preternatural mode in the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, no one may lay claim to it nor say that he is called to this kind of contemplation from the sole fact that he received all the gifts in holy baptism. In this there is only a passive, negative *aptitude*, which cannot be described as a *call* without a wrong use of words. Doubtless the acorn is *called* to become a great oak, for it has at least the radical power to do

so (Fr. Lagrange's comparison, p. 97), but this power is active and positive. On the contrary, a block of marble cannot be said to be *called* to become "a god, a table, or a basin," its aptitude being only passive or negative. Now such is the mystical state, since it is characterized by an essential passivity in the hands of God.

Finally, if every Christian were called to infused contemplation from the mere fact of having received at baptism the gifts of the contemplative life, it might be equally concluded that, since he received at the same time all the opposite gifts of the active life, he is called to the active life.

Let us conclude. The wholly *a priori* way in which the mystical question is persistently propounded is nothing but an immense begging of the question, a vicious circle, in which one can only turn by moving round the same spot. As we see no hope of getting out we prefer not to enter in, but to propound the same problem in another way, from the standpoint of observed facts, to which "our poor human formulas" must adapt themselves instead of doing them violence.

APPENDIX IV

Reply to the "Vie Spirituelle" (Nos. of November, 1922, and January, 1923)

There are no infused ideas in infused contemplation.—The rôle of impressed and expressed species in the sensation of the divine.

In order to reach that agreement which is so desirable, our first duty is clearly to understand the meaning of the opposing or divergent theses, for if we begin by distorting them—in good faith, I willingly admit—arguments will go astray or be useless, and opposition will be accentuated without valid reasons.

Urged by this thought, I now reply to the article in the *Vie spirituelle* of November, 1922, which was completed in January, 1923, in order to remove certain regrettable misunderstandings.

The article is entitled *La contemplation requiert-elle des idées infuses?* It forcibly reproaches me for maintaining that contemplation necessarily requires infused ideas. Now there is a misapprehension here, for I have never used the expression *infused ideas* either in the pages of *Mystical Phenomena*, or in

my *Replies*, or in the article referred to in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*. But I have spoken there constantly, more than fifty times, of *infused impressed species*, which is a very different thing.

To translate *impressed species* by *ideas* is a misunderstanding quite unlooked for from the pen of sound Thomists, as we are. It would be less astonishing on the part of a disciple of Suarez, as we shall see, but I protest none the less against this essential distortion of my thought and of the thesis which I maintain. I must also prevent the spread of this legend, which is beginning to find its way into other Reviews.

In order to put my finger on the seriousness of this misunderstanding, I find myself forced to put forward a little scholastic philosophy, by placing St Thomas's theory of knowledge in opposition to that of Suarez; and if any reader complain of me for descending from the heights of mysticism to the domain of psychology, it is enough for me to reply: Do you expect to arrive at an understanding of mystical knowledge without having as yet grasped man's natural knowledge—and especially that *sensible* knowledge, to which St Thomas and all mystics have by analogy likened mystical knowledge? Clearly not. It is impossible, for the first is but an analogous application of the second—the two are joined together. Every error in respect of the one is reflected in the other, obscures it or disfigures it. *The spiritual sensation of the divine* can only be explained by a theory of sensation.

This is so evident that a former Professor of Philosophy, well acquainted with the present controversies, recently wrote to me: "It may well be that it is the true and fruitful theory of immediate sensible knowledge, according to St Thomas, that is lacking to our opponents. By means of this, light is thrown on everything; without it, nothing will ever be understood." Far be it from me to think of reproducing here a complete exposition of it, when it has already called for a whole volume from my pen. I shall only endeavour to sum it up in a few words, not for masters, who have no need of it whatever, but for those numerous readers who, lacking in Thomist training, become entangled between *impressed* and *expressed species* in interminable blunders. Moreover, several such readers have begged me to do so.

In spite of the stupendous difficulty of such a short summary, my task will be lessened by the very opposition and contrast between the two theories of St Thomas and Suarez.

According to Suarez, man knows only by expressing within himself an idea (or word, or expressed species): *exprimendo cognoscit.* Human knowledge, then, would only be indirect, specular, in the mirror of our ideas, without ever possessing the immediate intuition of any reality. From this, by amplification, has sprung modern subjectivism. *We know directly only our ideas.*[1]

According to St Thomas, on the contrary, it is only after having directly perceived some sensible reality, that we express it within ourselves by an expressed species (or word, or idea): *cognoscendo exprimit.* This is the complete reverse of the first formula, *exprimendo cognoscit.*

Now St Thomas was right. There is a most striking proof given by John of St Thomas: " If the word were formed before knowledge, there must have been speech before knowledge. Such speech then would be blind, because one would say what one did not know " (*Phil. nat.*, vol. iii, q. 6, a. 4). This argument seems to us to be decisive.

Sensible knowledge, then, precedes expressed species or idea or word. But how is it produced ? St Thomas has replied: by the simple contact of an organ which feels and is conscious with an object which is felt. It is this *touch* or *imprint* of the object felt in the organ feeling, thus producing the *informing* of the animate organ by the *action* of the object, which is called by the Schools *impressed species*, very different, as will be seen, from the *expressed species* (word or idea). This latter is only the expression or inward utterance, in the mind, of a previous knowledge already obtained. By this utterance or idea I seek to translate to myself, first of all in images, then in abstract concepts, both analytic and synthetic, my intuition

[1] It should be noted that this error of Suarez flows from his negation, more or less disguised, of what is called *transitive action*, a negation which was inherited, without any disguise, by Descartes, and in his wake by all modern philosophy. (See the *Revue Néo-scolastique*, May, 1921: *Deux déviations de la théorie thomiste sur l'action transitive*, 3rd part). Doubtless the action called transitive does not travel from the agent into the patient: this would be absurd. But it seems to do so, and equivalently does so, because it is *common* to the agent and to the patient, who simultaneously concur to produce it, although in an inverse sense. But the action has only a priority of nature, and not of time, over the passion. Thus is brought about the communication of substances, unconscious in minerals and plants, and conscious among sensible beings. It is their action (or in the second place, their qualities) which is their *trait d'union.* (See our *Études philosophiques*, 7th edition, vol. i, pp. 256-265, 370-401: *Revue Thomiste*, December, 1919, p. 312.)

already experienced of the real and concrete object which I have felt.

The idea (or expressed species or word) is not then necessary for the formation of this first knowledge—and the blessed in heaven manage quite well without it—but it is none the less of great use, since it completes it and becomes the *mental substitute* for it, remaining in the memory after the disappearance of the object felt. The sense, St Thomas adds, has no need of expressed species in order to know the object which touches it: *sensus exterior non format sibi aliquam formam sensibilem.* It knows by the conscious informing alone of the action of the object which is impressed in it: *cognitio sensus exterioris perficitur per solam immutationem sensus a sensibili, unde per formam quae sibi a sensibili imprimitur* (impressed species) (*Quodlib.* v, a. 9, ad 2; *Quodlib.* viii, a. 3; I, q. lxxviii, a. 4, ad 2; q. lxxxv, a. 2, ad 3; etc.).

Such, in its enlightening simplicity, is the theory of St Thomas regarding the outward sensation of material objects. The theory is the same for the *inward sense* and *intellectual consciousness* which grasp the *ego*, with its active and passive modifications. Here the object to be perceived being again *present*, as in the outward senses, we need no *expressed species* for it to be made known to us; we grasp it, says St Thomas, by its presence alone: *anima per essentiam suam se videt, id est ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens, est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius* (*De Verit.*, q. x, a. 8).

But, let it be well noted, this again only concerns an habitual knowledge ready to pass to the act—that is to say, an obscure and confused consciousness. In order to have a clear and distinct knowledge of the *existence* of our ego, we furthermore require reflection on our acts. St Thomas expressly teaches this —the intelligence only grasps itself in its act: *per actum suum se cognoscit intellectus noster . . . particulariter* (I, q. lxxxvii, a. 1). And he repeats the words of Aristotle: *Anima cognoscitur per actus suos.* Thus, long before Descartes, it was he (St Thomas) who said: " I think, therefore I am." *Prius est intelligere aliquid quam intelligere se intelligere* (*et esse*); *et ideo pervenit anima ad actualiter percipiendum se esse, per illud quod intelligit vel sensit* (*De Verit.*, q. x, a. 8). It is the impression of our act on ourselves which is here the *impressed species*, equivalent to that of the external senses. As for the latter, it suffices for the thinking ego, without any *expressed species*, to perceive its own existence,

so that *cogito ergo sum* is not a conclusion from reasoning, however rapid we suppose it, but a simultaneous intuition of the action and the agent. The existence of the agent is perceived in its very action: thus we immediately say "*my* action" and not "*your* action." *Simul dum videtur effectus*, says St Thomas, *videtur et causa in ipso . . . est visio utriusque . . . haec cognitio non est discursiva* (*sed intuitiva*) (*C. Gent.*, bk. iii, c. 49).[1]

It is the same, by analogy, for the spiritual sensation of the divine or of the divine touch, which is the very essence of contemplation, produced in the most intimate depth of our consciousness, where God is even more present than we ourselves are to ourselves. Here again the *species impressa*—which we translate more clearly by *imprint* or *divine touch*—suffices to produce the sensation of the active presence of God, or mystical knowledge. There is no need for *expressed species* or abstract concepts. It is enough to feel the touch of the divine agent in order immediately to seize his presence in his action itself, as St Thomas clearly teaches: *una videt Deum in alia* (*ibid.*).

Doubtless the idea *may follow*, but, once more let it be stated, this is not necessary, and the blessed quite well dispense with it, as we have said. On this earth, the idea, more or less obscure, commonly follows the divine touch and the intuition resulting from it, but it follows *naturally* and is not infused. Far from being so, its formation is always laborious and troublesome, the translation of something new and ineffable into human ideas and words being always, from its very nature, at the limit of our strength and often even impossible, as the prophet avowed: *A A A, Domine, ecce nescio loqui.*

[1] It would be very different if, instead of speaking of the *existence* of the ego, we were speaking of its *nature*. Here reasoning and abstraction—and therefore the abstract ideas or *expressed species*—are indispensable, for it is not enough to grasp oneself, in order to understand oneself: *Mens nostra non potest se ipsam* intelligere *ita quod se ipsam* immediate apprehendat (*De Verit., ibid.*). Consequently we cannot admit the Suarezian principle that the *impressed species is only the generating principle of the expressed species*. According to St Thomas, on the contrary, it is the formal cause (*medium quo*) of an immediate intuition, which is produced without the medium of the expressed species (*medium in quo*), each time that, the object to be perceived being present, there is no need to represent it to us in order to *present* it to us, as does the imagination, or else to construct it as abstraction must do. Now such is certainly the case whether as regards the outward senses or the internal sense or intellectual consciousness, the object of which is necessarily present, so that they are never able to perceive absent objects.

This is the suffering of the *Great Darkness;* a luminous darkness, certainly, and a revealing novelty, but one that is untranslatable into clear ideas. Now it is this transluminous obscurity which appears to be the most ordinary foundation of the contemplative state.

We thus see how much the thesis of the necessity of infused ideas, and above all of clear ideas for contemplation, which is ascribed to me, is opposed to my thought, since, on the contrary, I exclude them, admitting only the necessity for infused impressed species, or divine touches, more or less clear or obscure, for the mystical sensation of the divine.[1]

Consequently I have been wrongly accused of confusing contemplation with prophecy or with Adam's infused knowledge. For the prophet the infusion of ideas is needful in order to foretell the future, but he has not any need of the sensation of the divine, the essence of mystical contemplation. Infused ideas or images revealing to him the future are enough, provided that they are sufficiently clear for him to translate them into human language and announce them to men.

Prophecy, then, needs both infused light and infused images or ideas. Nevertheless, these two elements might be divided into two distinct subjects. Thus Pharaoh received the images: Joseph the light to interpret them. But the light without the images would not have been sufficient for this prophecy (II-II, q. clxxiii, a. 2).

It is the same for Adam's knowledge. He needed infused ideas, even ideas clear and distinct enough to deserve the name of infused knowledge.

If I have called the new vision of infused contemplation by the name " revelation " or " inspiration," in the wake of St Thomas and of the greatest mystics,[2] it is therefore in a sense

[1] Properly speaking, it may be said that there is no *infused idea.* The idea or *expressed* species, being a vital act, cannot be completely infused, for God cannot perform our act of thinking or willing in place of ourselves. It is never, therefore, the fruit of grace *operating alone*, but of *co-operating* grace. On the contrary, the *impressed* species may be wholly infused, and this is the sole wholly passive intellectual element by which the vital act of contemplation is at once set free.

[2] Ruysbroeck expressly states that infused contemplation requires " a secret revelation from God " (quoted by Mgr. Waffelaert in the *Revue d'ascétiq. et de mystiq.*, January, 1923, p. 36, note). In the same way St Thomas calls those contemplatives who merit this revelation of God like the angels, *qui revelationes divinas merentur;* and far from making it an exception, he makes of it a category, *secundus modus visionis*, intermediate between face-to-face and abstract vision (*In II*, dist. xxiii, q. 2, a. 1; *De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1; I, q. lvi, a. 2, c; a. 3, etc.).

very different from prophetic revelation, which alone implies infused ideas.

It is unnecessary to point out the other false consequences arising from the confusion with which I have been so gratuitously credited, since the starting-point whence they spring is thus overthrown. Far from maintaining the necessity of infused ideas in contemplation, I once again formally exclude them, proclaiming only the necessity for infused species or divine touches.

But there is a very necessary consequence that flows from this Thomist theory of sensation, which it is important to emphasize: it is the *necessity of a medium* (impressed species) between God and the contemplative soul, as between the object felt and the subject feeling, and this is a main point on which our thought is too often misunderstood or falsified.

We maintain with all theologians that in the glory of heaven alone no *medium* whatever is necessary (neither created *impressed species* nor *expressed species*) between the divine essence and the human intelligence.

On earth, on the contrary, the contemplative, even when uplifted by grace, has need of a *medium* (excepting in the case of St Paul, who was raised in a very passing and inferior way to the vision of the blessed—but this exception confirms the rule). This is the first essential difference between the vision of heaven and that of the mystics—*a medium is necessary*—but it is not the only one.

Another difference, no less important, though it appears sometimes to be forgotten in spite of the insistent way we have italicized it, is this: In heaven it is the very *essence* of God, into which we shall then be consciously plunged, which will be the object of our intuitive vision; on earth, on the contrary, the mystical sensation of the divine, like all other sensations, which never reach the essence of the object which strikes them, and which reasoning alone enables us more or less to penetrate—perceives only the action in our souls of the divine Agent, at the same time that his presence is perceived in these very actions—his essence remaining for us unknown.

This *medium* or *impressed species* in the sensation of the divine, being a created act of God, may be compared, as by all the mystics, to a transparent veil; but, being of divine creation, it is infinitely more transparent and more revealing than the *expressed species* or abstract concept of Suarez, which is of human

creation; also it is a more exact translation of the unanimous testimony of the mystical saints, who affirm to us that in their experiences God is not only thought of, in an abstract concept, but also felt, touched, experienced in an ineffable manner, and that their faith from it became transparent and without reasoning.

Finally, this *psychological medium* of *impressed species* has never prevented either ordinary people or philosophers from calling the perception of the senses *immediate* when it only takes place in this unique way, provided that the *logical* method of reasoning be excluded. Nor can those of the Suarezian school, who themselves also call the perception of outward senses *immediate*, reproach us with a misuse of words, although they say that this only takes place with *two* means instead of one: with both *impressed* and *expressed* species.

It is this technical language of philosophers that has given rise to error among certain profane writers not acquainted with its terminology, making them think that in the mystical sensation we do not really acknowledge any *medium*, as in the beatific vision. The blustering outcries of these opponents have been mistaken for calumny; we find in them nothing more than a failure to understand scholastic and Thomist theories.

Indeed, the obscure vision of the mystics remains very far off from the beatific vision, for all the reasons which we have just explained. Nevertheless, it is necessary for us while on earth to resign ourselves to speaking of the Divine in human language, and in order nobly to do it justice, not to refrain from repeating with St Thomas, and all the mystical saints without exception, these bold words which can scandalize only the weak: *In hac etiam vita, purgato oculo per donum intellectus, Deus quodammodo videri potest* (I-II, q. lxix, a. 2, ad 3). This restriction, *quodammodo*, let it be noted, which allows of this immeasurable distance between the two visions, also affirms that that of the mystics is, if not identical, at least analogous to the immediate perceptions of the outward senses.

Having thus explained the real sense of my thesis by freeing it from travesty, it will be of use to sum up its two principal proofs, which are *two great facts* universally admitted in the mystical experiences of every country and every age.

The first fact is this: The loving knowledge of infused contemplation—the centre to which all mystical life converges—is truly a *sensation of the divine* and of divine things or opera-

tions of God in the soul—as Dionysius, and in his wake St Thomas and all contemplatives, have so often repeated: (*παθὼν θεία*) *patiens divina :* it is a *theopathic* state.

To deny this " experimental knowledge "—analogous to sensation, so different from all abstract processes, so clearly analysed by St Thomas and proclaimed at the Carmelite Congress of Madrid—to deny this fact and to see in it only metaphors and manners of speaking, would be to denaturalize the most formal texts of St Augustine, of the pseudo-Dionysius, of Richard of St Victor, of Dionysius the Carthusian, of St Teresa and of all the great mystics, to reject the testimony of the saints, and to destroy the basis of all mystical life by reducing it to the ordinary Christian life of interior souls. We can make no compact with this minimization.

It is not that we deny other states of the soul in which knowledge is only *quasi*-experimental, because, instead of being intuitive, *simplex intuitus*, they start from *affective states*, in order to ascend by induction from effects to their cause, to *end* with the action and presence of God. Far from that, we grant that such states exist, and even that they are incomparably more numerous, and also that St Thomas often makes allusion to them. But, with him, we maintain that in contemplation these states are only *secondary* and *preparatory* to the former, which constitute true contemplation in the strict sense of the word, as the holy Doctor expressly says: *Contemplatio divinorum effectuum secundario ad vitam contemplativam pertinet, prout, sc. hoc manuducitur homo in Dei* (*in se ipso*) *cognitionem* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 4 ; q. clxxiv, a. 5 ; *In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 5, a. 1, and q. 1, a. 2, etc.). And elsewhere, *Nomen contemplationis significat illum actum quo quis Deum in se ipso* (*et non in effectibus*) *contemplatur* (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2). Contemplation, therefore, in the strict sense is truly a direct sensation of the divine.

Now there is no sensation without an *impressed species*, any more than a triangle without angles: it would be quite as contradictory. No good Thomist philosopher is able to refute this, as experience shows.

As regards the sensation of touch, this is evident. The presence of a material object is not enough; it is also necessary for its relief and form to be impressed (impressed species) in the living and conscious tactile organ.

For the sensation of sight it is equally clear. Light is not enough: it is also needful for the colour and form of a distant

object to be by it borne into and impressed on the sense of sight (impressed species). As modern physiologists have so well said, in the wake of Aristotle and St Thomas, sight is only a *retinal touch*, and all the other senses are only varied modes of one sense, that of touch. *Non debet poni alter sensus praeter tactum* (*De Verit.*, q. xxii, a. 5).

In the sense of sight, St Thomas also says, it is not light that is the principle of vision or its specific form, *medium quo ;* it is the impressed species, *species* (*impressa*) . . . *principium est visivae operationis* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 1). Light is only an instrument (*medium sub quo*), which carries this form and impresses it in the senses (the reflection of the idea or the image would only be the *medium in quo* of an indirect knowledge). So that the reproach which the writer makes to me of *materializing St Thomas* (a big word which throws dust in the eyes) becomes a weapon against him, since by suppressing impressed species he suppresses the very *form* of sensible knowledge and retains only the *matter* and the material instrument.

It is the same by analogy as regards the sensation of the divine. It would be unintelligible without that touch of the divine Agent, of which all the mystics constantly speak, which *impresses* in their minds and hearts its ineffable imprint or *infused impressed species*.

Ask of St John of the Cross in what mystical contemplation essentially consists. His answer is: " Contemplation is to receive ": *La contemplacion pura consiste en recibir*. And to receive what ? It is, he adds, to receive " the touch of the intelligence in which God impresses (impressed species) a pure knowledge without image," and in the heart " the touch of pure love "[1] (*Living Flame*, str. iii, § 7). Without the impression of this touch of the mind and heart, *toqui di noticia y sabor*, mystical contemplation would never take place. It only begins with the divine touch.

It is true that this impressed species or divine touch may be more or less obscure or indistinct, but it is no less indispensable in the most obscure sensations than in the most luminous, since it is the *formal cause*, and therefore the essential cause, of all sensation.

It may also be more or less freed from the senses and sensible

[1] It is objected that the impressed species is only in the intelligence or in the consciousness and not in the heart. This is true, but the touch of the heart does not take place without that of consciousness.

images, according to the degree of perfection in the contemplation. And it is not indispensable for it to be purely spiritual as with the angels. But where it is of the same nature as those coming from the senses—the most frequent case—its *infused origin* allows it still to be compared to that of the angels. In either case, in fact, the knowledge is brought about by a divine touch, by *direct contact of the intelligence with the action* of God, without any of our abstract processes. Now it is by this, says St Thomas, that the angelic nature is continuous with that of contemplative man. *Homo, in quantum est contemplativus, est aliquid supra hominem, quia in visione simplici intellectus continuatur homo superioribus substantiis quae intelligentiae vel Angeli dicuntur* (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2).—(See *above*, p. 242.)

To interpret angelic contemplation as *purely spiritual*, as M. Saudreau continues to do, is to falsify our thought and that of St Thomas. This purity is not absolutely necessary; it is enough that the infusion of divine touches or impressed species—the angelic process—has replaced the human abstract process. Infused contemplation, then, is an *imperfect* or *perfect* imitation of that of the angels according as it takes place with or without images.

The *second* well-known *fact* is the character of *novelty* in the various visions offered to the contemplative in infused contemplation. We are reminded that Benedict XIV made this either entire or at least partial newness the third and most important test which differentiates infused from acquired contemplation (above, p. 244). The mode alone of *experimental knowledge of the divine* would suffice to produce a newness. In this the learned Pope but re-echoed St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and all contemplatives who have had experience of it, as well as the common teaching of theologians.

In passing from acquired to infused contemplation, it seemed to them that they entered an entirely new world, so different from the former—such as the *Great Darkness*—that they were wholly disconcerted by it, and remained in the strangest stupefaction, a painful trial which all directors have unanimously met with in connection with mystical souls.

In mystical theology, writes St Teresa, " the understanding . . . stands as if amazed at the greatness of the things that it contemplates; for God wills it to understand nothing whatever

of that which his Majesty places before it" (*Life*, ch. x). A little further on she adds: "He puts before it that which astonishes and occupies it; so that, without making any reflections, it shall comprehend in a moment more than we could comprehend in many years with all the efforts in the world" (*Life*, ch. xii).

It is useless to multiply analogous quotations[1] to show that infused contemplation carries with it wholly new enlightenment. These two texts suffice to consolidate our thought and enable us to reason thus.

"To see light" is a metaphor, or else it would have no meaning. We do not see light, but by means of it we see the luminous objects which it discovers to us. And in order to see something new, it is needful for it to show us new objects or new aspects by imprinting their new forms on our vision. Therefore light is not enough; a second element is needed, the principal element, which we have just seen is called by St Thomas the *formal cause* of the vision, namely, the impression in the sense of sight of the object or new spectacle, that is, its impressed species.

The holy Doctor merely made these elementary principles of his psychology apply to the knowledge of the first contemplative when he wrote: "Adam, in order to contemplate God, had need of two means, supernatural light and infused impressed species": *Indigebat* (*Adam*) *duplici medio . . . species . . . lumen* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, ad 1).

To reply, as has been done (p. 7), that this only refers to Adam "in a state of innocence," is inadmissible. Moreover, it is a distinction which St Thomas in the same place was careful to discard. Although more perfect in Adam in a state of innocence than with other contemplatives after the fall, contemplation remains of the same nature and differs only in degree of perfection. *Sic per gratiam* [*Deus*] *videtur a contemplante, post statum peccati, quamvis perfectius in statu innocentiae* (*De Verit., ibid.*, ad 4).

Contemplation, then, requires two means: *duplici medio . . . species et lumen.* Nevertheless, in the same passage the holy Doctor seems to admit only a difference of reason between these two means—at least for mystical knowledge—and he grants their fundamental identity. It is the same grace which

[1] "As these mansions are nearer the King's dwelling . . . so subtle are the things seen and heard in them, that . . . the mind cannot give a lucid idea of them to those inexperienced in the matter" (*Castle*, 4th M., ch. i).

plays the role of infused light which is also the infused species or the representative form of uncreated objects: *Quia per aliquod spirituale lumen menti hominis influxum divinitus, quod erat quasi similitudo expressa lucis increatae, Deum videbat* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 1, c).

This simplification has already been noted by Fr. J. Huby in the *Recherches de Science ecclésiastique* (May, 1919, p. 142), and I am happy to note this unexpected agreement.

Also, later on, St Thomas often makes use of the word light, *lumen contemplationis*, to indicate these two elements taken together, theoretically distinct but practically confused. For instance, he says: *in contemplatione Deus videtur per medium quod est lumen sapientiae* (*ibid.*, ad 4). It is, in fact, useless to mention each time the infused species with infused light, since it is the light itself which produces them and impresses them, as we have just explained. He thus comes back again, without in any way contradicting himself, to the common language of the simple faithful and of writers to whom these deep scholastic analyses are unknown.

The word light in *mysticism* is therefore an abridged, elliptical expression in which the part is taken for the whole, and far from excluding impressed species, it necessarily implies them, in accordance with St Thomas's general theory of knowledge.

There are, then, infused impressed species, not "each time our faculties receive an impression of operating grace," as we have been made to say (p. 10), but each time that this operating grace is the impression of a new knowledge in our intelligence or in our consciousness, for light without new species would not cause us to know anything new.

The great mystical theologians, who must have read this theory of impressed species in St Thomas, occasionally alluded to it. Thus St John of the Cross often speaks of the *impression*, in the mind, of new knowledge, and when he tells us still more clearly, "God communicates himself passively to the soul like the material light to him whose eyes are open" (*Ascent*, II, xiii), it is evident that he does not speak of the light alone, but of the new spectacle, the form of which is impressed by the light in the mind of the contemplative. We once more admit that these lights are often indistinct and confused, but in these very expressions, so often repeated by our opponents, we find an avowal, for it is the forms or impressed species which may be indistinct or confused, and not the light itself.

Furthermore, let us now place ourselves in the hypothesis of our opponents who only admit the play of pure light falling on our concepts, already elaborated by us with the data of reason and faith. In order for us to discover something new in these—without any labour of analysis, of reasoning, of comparison and of abstraction, but by a simple regard, *simplex intuitus*—will it suffice for these concepts to be better enlightened? Certainly not. A brighter light will enable us better to see the details already contained in those concepts, but it cannot make us find in them details which they do not contain, because we have never conceived them, and still less wholly new spectacles to which we have never given thought. Indeed, if this light enlightened to our gaze the inexhaustibly rich ideas of God himself, the light would be sufficient, but—for us who reject ontologism—it only enlightens our poor and paltry conceptions, and cannot show us that which we have never put there.

Therefore, when, for instance, St Teresa tells us that, during this prayer of quiet " the soul sees as it were with the naked eye this particular help (of the action of God) " (*Life*, ch. xiv), how can we discover this *new fact* in our abstract concepts of reason and faith, which certainly do not contain it? However enlightened these concepts may be, once again it is impossible for them to see what is not there. To pure light, therefore, are added luminous forms or species which imprint the sensation of a new fact. Without this new sensation such contemplation could never take place. This is clearly evident.[1]

In heaven, it is true, it will be altogether different. There will then be no longer any abstract concepts to be enlightened, no longer any created impressed species, because we shall be plunged into the very reality of the essence of God, and the divine light will suffice to make us contemplate the details and the infinite depths. But until that happy moment the contemplation of God will always require the two means, so well analysed by St

[1] We have set aside the case in which the grace of God would be content, by the drawing together and the comparing of two or more pre-existing concepts, with bringing about the springing up of a new idea—without any infused impressed species. It might be disputed whether this process would be enough to produce the *sensation of the divine*, and whether it ought to be classed with infused contemplation. We ourselves are inclined to look on this case as an intermediate one or a *bridge* between acquired and infused contemplation. But this is an accessory detail and purely a matter of classification (*Myst. Phen.*, pp. 83-4, 313-14, 578).

Thomas, the *lumen* and the *species impressa*, equally necessary for the first contemplative in a state of innocence; *indigebat Adam duplici medio*, and for all other contemplatives since the redemption. This is the sole conclusion that can agree with the broad psychological lines of the theory of sensible knowledge according to St Thomas.

The end of the article in question repeats the same confusion already pointed out, and wherever I have written *infused impressed species* he insists on reading *infused ideas;* wherever the mystics write *divine light*, he adds gratuitously, *excluding all impressed species*. This shows once more that no one is exempt from certain misunderstandings, especially in the warmth of discussion. The refutation having been already accomplished, I should let it rest there if the writer had not had the very unlooked-for notion of invoking in his favour the two great authorities indicated by me: Benedict XIV and Cardinal Billot.

Certainly this attempt is new and worthy of remark.

Instead of stating, as is done in the *Vie spirituelle* (March, 1921, p. 465), that Benedict XIV only put forward personal opinions which he himself admitted were open to dispute, and to which "he did not attach great importance" (see above, p. 237), the tactics are changed and an endeavour is now made to prove, on the contrary, that he was of their opinion and in perfect agreement with them. As regards Cardinal Billot they do not hesitate to write: "The divergence between him and us is scarcely more than verbal."

This is certainly all very new, but I am not greatly perturbed by it. I am acquainted with the old saying, "With a little talent it is possible to plead any cause. . . ."

But there might be a much shorter and more simple means than that of argument to draw us out of this interminable jungle of texts. If the author whose writings are so freely interpreted be living—which happily is so in the case of Cardinal Billot—it is sufficient to go and interview him to know his real view in an authentic way. Now I had the curiosity to do this, and this is the answer which his Eminence has been so good as to give me: *It goes without saying that in this controversy we are substantially in full agreement* (Rome, October 27, 1922). This fundamental agreement with the great theologian on so complex a subject is enough for me—it will easily be completed as regards details.

Should the writer of the article have the same curiosity as myself, the final result of the same interview enables me to predict that he will be disappointed and that the eminent theologian, speaking quite frankly, as he has the right to do, especially in the domain of theology, will definitely inform him of his irreducible opposition, at least as regards the two theses which are the fundamental subject of our controversy: that of *contemplation accessible to all*, and that of the *impossibility of two distinct modes*, not only of degree but of kind, in the operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

As regards Benedict XIV, it would be difficult to interview him now, but in view of my age I am preparing soon to meet him, and I shall ask him then if the adverb " sometimes," added by the Reverend Father (p. 50) to his *general* theory of contemplation in order to make of it an *exceptional* case, does not completely alter his thought. And when the Reverend Father comes to join me I shall hasten to let him know the reply, which as far as can be seen will be no different from that of Cardinal Billot.

What surprises are reserved for us all at that moment! and how much better it would be for us while on earth, instead of renewing the quarrels between Thomists and Molinists, to be a little more tolerant. On this account let us humbly acknowledge, as did St Thomas at the moment of death, that all we have written concerning the great divine mystery is very slight and insignificant in comparison with the knowledge of the blessed.

Let us then seek to understand one another better, and thanks to a little more good will in our interpretations, we may perhaps arrive at a better agreement. After all, it may be that it is but a question of classification. Where does ordinary contemplation end? Where does the extraordinary begin?[1]

[1] The writer in question ends by recognizing this in a note in his recent work, *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation* (p. 57 in App.): " Agreement among theologians on this question seems truly to be established. . . . Mgr. Waffelaert . . . only differs on the whole from what we say in terminology. He calls infused contemplation *in the strict sense* (as does Mgr. Farges) what we call, with Thomas of Jesus, *super-eminent* contemplation. . . ." This change is significant. As we have already stated, their mysticism ends about where ours and that of St Teresa begins.

APPENDIX V

Reply to the "Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique" (Nos. of January and April, 1923)

The direct apprehension of God in the mystical state

The *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* has just published two very remarkable articles by Father G. Picard, S.J., the reading of which appears to us to be indispensable to those who are interested in the present controversy as to the *direct apprehension of God in mystical contemplation.* The writer's principal thesis is that this direct apprehension of the *presence* of God in our consciousness is brought about *naturally*, although in an obscure way, by the intuitive powers of the intelligence, thanks to that presence of God in our souls alone *without any* psychological *medium* or any supernatural help.

According to us, on the contrary, it is not the human intelligence which discovers God naturally, but God who makes known his presence to the supernaturalized intelligence, although radically capable of apprehending it; and only does so here below by the created *medium* of a divine touch analogous to the impressed species common to all our other direct perceptions of the outward senses.

The former thesis is certainly the bolder and more brilliant; perhaps more hazardous also; the latter much more modest, yet it appears to us to be free from risk and more restful.

If we ask the writer's permission to compare them, it is merely in order that they may not be confused—even "by distraction," because of the resemblance in their titles—and with this end in view we are about to state very briefly the *resemblances* in the two positions, and then their essential *distinctions.* Let us begin with the resemblances.

I. *Their resemblances*

First of all, our *end* is the same. Let us try and make it clear. Granted that the *supernatural* is not a *miracle* and that it ought to find even in nature "stepping-stones," as it were, to be placed there, it behoves us to state precisely the point of insertion where it comes to be "grafted," according to the happy metaphor of St Paul.

It is useless to insist on this general principle, acknowledged

by St Thomas and therefore undisputed. *Gratia praesupponit naturam ut perfectio perfectibile* (I, q. ii, a. 2, ad 1). The " obediential potency " is not, according to the holy Doctor, independent of the natural potency; it is nature itself.

Now since it is the grace of infused contemplation that is here concerned, recently defined by the Carmelite Congress as " an experimental knowledge of divine things or realities "—that is to say, not an abstract knowledge, but one that is concrete, intuitive, and without reasoning, analogous to that of the senses which experience—the question is to know, in the first place, if such a grace can be grafted on to the intellectual or affective powers of the soul; and theologians are here divided into two camps: the *intellectual school*, and the *school of the heart*, understanding by the latter word the voluntary and affective powers.

We may conjecture that St Thomas, whose intellectualism is his most noteworthy characteristic, could only ally himself with the former school. Although he did not deal *ex professo* with contemplation, he has said enough about it in passing and when dealing with kindred subjects to remove from our minds any doubt as to this.

Thus, when seeking the subject, or faculty of the soul in which the contemplative gifts of the Holy Ghost dwell, he answers without hesitation that it is the *intelligence*. For the gift of understanding this is obvious, but for that of wisdom there was a possible doubt, for wisdom—if taken in the etymological sense of the word, which St Thomas does not unreservedly accept—*quasi sapida scientia*, would seem to indicate an affective state and a disposition of the will.

Nevertheless, the holy Doctor desires it to be placed also in the intelligence. And he demonstrates this in II-II, q. xlv, a. 2, in the article entitled *Utrum sapientia sit in intellectu sicut in subjecto*. Then, regarding the objection that the intelligence is already sufficiently completed by the first gift: *quod potentia intellectiva sufficienter perficitur per donum intellectus*, he replies that the intelligence has two functions: to *perceive* and to *judge*. The gift of understanding helps to perceive, that of wisdom to judge well, but both relate to the intelligence. *Intellectus habet duos actus : percipere et judicare. Ad quorum primum ordinatur donum intellectus, ad secundum autem, secundum rationes divinas judicare, donum sapientiae* (*ibid.*, ad 3).

The thought of denying to the heart that great place in con-

templation to which it has the right, was, however, very far from St Thomas's mind. He makes of it, first of all, his motive *cause* and his final *end*. " Although the contemplative life," he says, " consists in an operation of the intelligence, it has for its motive principle the love which brings us to the contemplation of God, and as the end corresponds with the principle, it results that the term and end of the contemplative life is also love—that is to say, that in the vision of the object the soul has its delight, and that in turn the delight of the object contemplated enflames the love " (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 7, ad 1).

Yet more, love, whilst being both the principle and the term of contemplation, is its powerful *helper*, for if it is of itself blind and unable to perceive, nevertheless it helps to judge well, to judge spontaneously, and as it were by " connaturality " with things divine. Here is found St Thomas's beautiful theory concerning the " connaturality " of the judgements. It will explain to us how " the heart has reasons which reason cannot know."

In the same way, for instance, that a chaste man, by the very habit of the virtue, judges of it spontaneously and in a connatural way, so he who possesses the divine charity which unites us with God so as to make with him but " one spirit " will judge spontaneously of divine things, and this gift is that of wisdom. The loving heart, then, will be an indispensable auxiliary or a partial cause of wisdom without being its subject, which remains the understanding. *Sapientia quae est donum*, causam *quidam habet in voluntate, sc. charitatem, sed essentiam habet* in intellectu, *cujus actus est recte judicare . . . propter connaturalitatem quamdam ad ea de quibus est judicandum, sicut de his, quae ad castitatem pertinent . . . per quamdam connaturalitatem ad ipsam, recte judicat de eis ille qui habet habitum castitatis. . . . Hujus modi compassio, sive connaturalitas ad res divinas, fit per charitatem, quae quidem unit nos Deo secundum illud* (1 Cor. vi 17): *Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est* (II-II, q. xlv, a. 2, c.).

Such is the relationship of wisdom with the heart; but since it resides essentially in the understanding, it must produce something other than a connatural but blind tendency of the will—that is to say, an intellectual intuition comparable to the sense of touch or taste. Although the sense of touch is the most affective or obscure, it is, however, not on that account lacking in a certain intuition, *like all the other sensations*. " Doubtless," as our writer so well says, " God is not *formally* sweet, but neither is wormwood in its very self *formally* bitter. In the mind of mystical writers, just as the feeling of bitterness is the

direct knowledge of wormwood, so the intimate sweetness of the divine presence is, in the concrete, the direct apprehension of God present."

In making the sensation of spiritual taste a purely subjective state, without any intuition, the school of the heart therefore is placed completely outside the philosophical data of the school of St Thomas, as also of that of St Teresa, who has so often insisted on the radical difference between the *tastes* of Quiet, which are intuitive,[1] and the simple *consolations* of the lower states or of acquired contemplation, which are purely affective and deprived of the true sensation of the divine.

However important, then, the role of the heart may be, it is not everything in contemplation, and the school of the heart has only observed one side of the question, the subjective *effects* of mystical love—that is to say, a *secondary* and *preparatory* side to the primary, that of intellectual intuition, as St Thomas formally teaches. *Contemplatio divinorum effectuum*, he says, secundario *ad vitam contemplativam pertinet, prout sc. homo ex hoc* manducitur *in Dei* (*in se ipso*)—(II-II, q. clxxx, a. 4; q. clxxiv, a. 5; *In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 5, a. 1; and q. i, a. 2). Moreover, he defined the principal act of contemplation as intuitive, *simplex intuitus: Nomen contemplationis significat illum actum principalem quo quis Deus in se ipso* (et non effectibus) *contemplatur* (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2).

To see nothing in contemplation but a series of images and divine motions accompanied by abstract notions, then, is to leave out the principal thing, the intuitive act of the intelligence, which grasps the concrete, and to stop halfway, at the preparatory affective states. According to the repeated teaching of St Thomas, " Contemplative life consists principally in an operation of the intelligence, and the very name of contemplation," he says, " signifies vision " (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2), and consequently vision of a concrete object.

This theory of St Thomas regarding intelligence as the essential subject of the gifts of contemplation presupposes another, that of the radical capacity of the human intelligence for mystical intuition, and therefore for intuition in general of real or concrete being: one of the most beautiful theories of the holy Doctor's psychology and metaphysics, the synthesis of which we venture briefly to recall.

[1] " Learning would serve to show how our Lord now will have the soul to see, as it were, with the naked eye, as men speak, this particular help of grace " (*Life*, ch. xiv).

Fr. Picard is quite right to raise a doubt (p. 41 note) as to the famous formula *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*—because he does not quote it completely. He should, to make it exact, have added the classic reservation *Nisi intellectus ipse*. Although the senses may be the source of all our knowledge and naturally accompany it all, they are not the sole cause of it.

The human mind draws its ideas from a double source, the one outward, the other inward, the world and consciousness; and in either case it is raised from concrete realities perceived intuitively to the general notions corresponding thereto. Furthermore, as we have stated in our *Cours* (*Psychologie*, no. 141, 32nd edition), consciousness is a source of ideas that is wholly necessary, and much clearer and more fruitful—even though it be only discovered later and after the outward world—(*a*) it is *necessary* because material objects are powerless to furnish the ideas of inward life, of moral life, without which we cannot know either God or the human soul; (*b*) it is *clearer*, for the inward world is more open to us and more intimate than that of matter; (*c*) finally, it is more *fruitful*, for it is by consciousness that we are raised to the most lofty truths of the moral life and of the divine life. We cannot then approve the manner of speaking of certain neo-scholastics, according to whom the mind grasps neither itself nor its acts in their intimate and present reality, but only in an indirect way by negative and analogical concepts abstracted from sensible things.[1]

The human intelligence, then, is intuitive of the facts and of the concrete data of consciousness. It perceives directly the *actual ego*, with all its active and passive modalities. As has been truly said (*Revue Thomiste*, 1900, p. 399), "It is the *faculty of being*," but of the *real* being, which it wishes to grasp and to embrace, not of the *abstract* being, which is only an incomplete copy, and, as it were, a shadow of the reality. Its principal role is to take hold of beings by becoming like them ideally whilst remaining itself, and this is why the human soul is thus able to *become everything* by assimilation, according to the famous expression of Aristotle, re-echoed by St Thomas: *nata est fieri omnia*.

Its most lofty role, then, is not to form abstract concepts and to combine them, *componendo et dividendo*, in order to imitate

[1] *Cf.* Mgr. E. Blanc, *Une interprétation abusive de S Thomas* (L'Université Cathol., February 15, 1913); and the *Pensée contemporaine*, 1913, pp. 5-13, 74-84.

reality afar off. Abstraction and other rational operations are only justified because they are necessary efforts of the intelligence, blended with the senses, to supplement intuition provisionally when the latter is impossible here below, and to simulate it while awaiting something better. The reasoning itself, that nerve of human knowledge, far from being characteristic of the intelligence, is only a defective effect of sensible nature: *quod defectus quidam intellectus est ratiocinatio* (*C. Gent.*, I, lvii). It is the intuitive intelligence, then, which is the highest part of the soul, and it is owing to this that in the Incarnation it is through it directly and not through the reasoning reason that the Word of God became united to the soul.[1] This beautiful theory of St Thomas, in spite of his robust belief in reason, is, then, the triumph of intellectualism over rationalism, and also over voluntarism and the school of the heart.

The intelligence is higher than the will because the former *holds* within itself the known being, whilst the latter only *tends* towards it from outside, and because it is better to possess within ourselves as form the nobleness of another than to have this as an external end and to repose in it (*De Verit.*, xv, 2 and xxii, 11).

Unfortunately the field of our intellectual intuition of the real is limited here on earth to that of the consciousness of the actual ego. The soul, ever present to itself, says St Thomas, only knows itself actually by its operations; without these it would sleep in unconsciousness: *Intellectus noster per actum suum se cognoscit . . . particulariter* (I, q. lxxxvii, a. 1). This intuition of itself is direct, without any *expressed species*, as for the external senses, and without the medium of any abstract concept. The action of the intelligence on itself, which takes the place for it of *impressed species*, is enough. It is thus that it apprehends directly its own existence, but not its own nature or its essence, which it is unable to understand without abstraction and reasoning. *Nec devenitur in cognitionem* (*essentiae*) *animae, nisi ratiocinando* (*In I*, d. iii, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3).

This domain of intuition as regards human intelligence,

[1] *Utrum Dei Filius assumpserit animam, mediante spiritu sive mente. . . . Filius Dei dicitur assumpsisse carnem, anima mediante . . .* (*animam autem*) *per hoc quod est capax Dei, ad imaginem ejus existens . . . quae spiritus dicitur. . . . Intellectus inter caeteras partes animae est superior et dignior, et Deo similior; et ideo unitum est* (*animae et*) *carni per medium intellectum Verbum Dei. Intellectus enim, est quid animae purissimum ; sed et Deus est intellectus* (III, q. vi, a. 2). Compare this with all we have said on *mystical trichotomy* and the highest part of the soul where divine communications are made (see pp. 245 ff.).

then, is very limited as compared with the angels, but it is through it that man resembles them. " Man," says St Thomas, " does not possess intellectuality as his own and his nature, he has only a spark of it, a small participation in it, as compared with the angels " (*In II*, dist. iii, q. 1, a. 2; and dist. xxxix, q. 3, a. 1).

In order to widen the field of the intuition of the real, and to increase this resemblance to pure spirits, the infusion of new impressed species or divine touches by God presenting to our consciousness new objects, as with the angels, will suffice. It is by this procedure that the mystical ascents of contemplation begin.[1]

However limited it may be by nature, this intuitive power of the human intelligence is none the less the most noble part of it, and it is by this that we are created in the image of God. It is the sense of the divine, because it renders us radically capable of grasping and of becoming *all being*, without excepting the divine Being. It is, on the contrary, because it is capable of grasping the infinite Being that it is the faculty of being in general. It is because we possess the " obediential potency " of seeing God that we have the natural power of grasping his reflections in all finite beings—but not the reverse. St Thomas, in the wake of St Augustine, has moreover ventured to call the human intelligence *capax Dei* (III, q. vi, a. 2; q. ix, a. 3, ad 2. St Augustine, *De Trinit.*, xiv, 11). And, as St Thomas says, the lowest of intellectual beings may be honoured with the same title: *Quod omnis intellectus, cujuscumque gradus, particeps esse potest divinae visionis* (*C. Gent.*, III, c. 57). And it is because man's intuitive intelligence is capable of this divine gift, which God has been able to promise him and to give him—either in plenitude in heaven, or as a nascent dawn in contemplation—through his all-powerful mercy.

Let us not fear that this capacity of the infinite makes the creature equal to God, for it remains a *passive* potency of all being, whilst in God it is the *active* potency of all being: divine knowledge being the cause of all created things.

The natural or supernatural point of insertion, or of vision, whether beatific or mystical, is thus discovered. It is found in the radical capacity for intuition of the real by the human

[1] *Homo, in quantum contemplativus, est aliquid supra hominem, quia in intellectus simplici visione continuatur homo superioribus substantiis quae Angeli dicuntur* (*In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 1, a. 2, sol. 3). Undoubtedly the intellectual power of intuition of the concrete is very *human*, but its object is new and *superhuman*.

intelligence. The contemplative life is the progressive conquest, finally found in its plenitude in heaven, of Reality. It is not, then, a psychological miracle, the mechanism of our most perfect intellectual knowledge is in no way changed by it, its functioning remains natural, but its objects are *new*—as Benedict XIV has so profoundly stated.

Henceforth its intuition attains to new realities, thanks to the supernatural infusion of impressed species or divine touches, as with the angels. Thus the first contemplative, St Thomas tells us, knew God by an inward touch,[1] like the angels: *Cognoscebat* (*Adam*) *Deum conformiter Angelis per inspirationem internam* (*De Verit.*, q. xviii, a. 2, c). And he repeats: *Ex quadam spirituali similitudine suae menti impressa . . . Adam conformabatur Angelo in cognitione contemplationis per gratiam* (*ibid.*, ad 4). In this he became the rival of the angels: *et ideo dicitur sicut alter angelus* (*ibid.*, a. 1, ad 12).[2] Man, then, is radically capable of angelic contemplation.

II. *The essential differences*

But it is not merely radical capacity to apprehend the action and the presence of God in the inner depths of our consciousness, by means of a supernaturalized intelligence, which the writer of the article appears to admit—it is a faculty exercised *naturally* and apprehending them in fact, although in an obscure manner, without any help of supernatural grace; and foreseeing the accusation of ontologism which would immediately be alleged against his hypothesis, he at once refutes it.

This refutation appears to us to be legitimate and rigorous, if the definition of ontologism given in our *Cours* (*Psychologie*, no. 124, ed. 32) be allowed: "It is the system which makes our ideas come from the immediate vision of God." We willingly grant that such is not the case with the present hypothesis, since it is not even occupied with the origin of our ideas. We nevertheless detach ourselves from it because it rests on the same principle as the ontologists, that of the *natural* vision of God. Certainly, this principle was not condemned by the Vatican Council—although we think it just missed being so condemned. The question is to know if it would not be

[1] There is nothing to prevent these divine touches, with the angels, from being *stable* or permanent.

[2] The pure spirituality of these impressed species, without images, is not necessary. Their *infused source* suffices for infused though *imperfect* contemplation.

condemnable, or at least very risky, in the eyes of a sound philosophy.

First of all, experience would seem to be against it, for outside the supernatural states of mystical contemplation men do not seem ever to have borne witness to this objective *sensation* of the real presence of God within them, and to arrive at simply the affective and subjective *sense* of this presence, they certainly require much reasoning and a certain degree of spiritual education of which few are capable.

The arguments from reason are not more convincing. They prove quite well the intimate presence of the divine Being in our souls. But there remains, all the same, the infinite disproportion between the two terms, and the radical impotence of an inferior nature to attain to a higher; of the finite to apprehend the infinite, without any supernatural help. This is what is stated by St Thomas: *Non servatur aequalitas potentiae ad objectum, quia Deus est altior quam anima* (*In I Sent.*, q. 3, a. 4).

The Creator is then outside the natural scope of his creature. Supernatural succour alone is able, most opportunely, to inverse the roles: instead of asking of the human intelligence a disproportioned effort in order to discover God, it is God who precedes the supernaturalized intelligence in order to discover himself to it, in his all-powerful mercy, and who discovers of it that only which pleases him, whilst the intelligence would only be able to discover *all or nothing*, because of the simplicity of the divine Being.

Furthermore, according to us, he does not as yet discover himself face to face, but through the *medium* of a divine touch or impressed species, and in nowise without any medium as the ontologists suppose. Now such an obscure vision, with a created medium, is quite different from the beatific vision, and runs no risk of confusing either the supernatural with nature or mystical contemplation with celestial glory.

No doubt—and this cannot be denied—the divine substance is still more present to our soul than the soul itself, but the *material* presence does not suffice for knowledge, and this is our third difficulty. A *formal* presence of the object known in the subject knowing is necessary, an *informing* of the subject by the action of the object, producing their union and their assimilation. Now this contact and this divine touch, far from being natural, are only met with in the order of mystical grace. It is once more St Thomas who teaches us this: *Quamvis*

Deus sit in anima per essentiam, praesentiam et potentiam, non tamen est in ea sicut objectum (*formale*) *intellectus, et hoc requiritur ad cognitionem* (*In I*, dist. iii, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3). This reply is to the point and enables us to dispense with several others, no less definite, were we to make a detailed criticism of the texts cited, which is not our object.

To sum up, we cannot admit either the *natural* power of the human intelligence to apprehend God, or the possibility, except with the light of glory, for the supernaturalized intelligence to apprehend God *without that medium* which we have called a divine touch or impressed species.

In this the sensation of the presence of God is comparable to all other direct intuitions of the senses or of the intelligence, in which the object is a concrete reality and not an abstraction, and in which this object, although present, is never attained save through its *action* (impressed species). Now the divine action *ad extra* may be infinitely more transparent and reveal the agent better than the action of creatures; and the analogy between the two direct perceptions of the divine or of the creature remains wholly to the advantage of the former. In either case the presence of the agent is perceived in the action itself, without reasoning: *Simul dum videtur effectus*, says St Thomas, *videtur causa in ipso . . . est visio utriusque. . . . Haec cognitio non est discursiva* (*sed intuitiva*) . . . una videt Deum in alia (*C. Gent.*, III, xlix, 1).

To enable us to understand it better St Teresa has made use of a striking image. In her *Interior Castle* she supposes that the divine Sun dwells in the centre, and that the different Mansions are only separated therefrom by crystal partitions more and more numerous or thick. The vision of it, then, is direct, although it is exercised only through the crystal, and therefore is very different from an indirect vision through outside images or abstract concepts.

Let us conclude. There is a method of stating this direct apprehension of God, to which all the mystical saints bear witness, without doing any violence either to their most formal texts or to the most authentic Thomist philosophy. Bold as the words of St Thomas appear at first sight when he repeats in a thousand forms, *In hac etiam vita, purgato oculo per donum intellectus*, Deus quodammodo videri potest (I-II, q. lxix, a. 2, ad 3), analogy gives them solid foundation, and his disciples are safe in venturing to re-utter them and henceforth to

place this intuition—obscure as it is—as the only possible limit between the two orders of contemplation, acquired and infused, ascetic and mystical. It introduces the soul into a wholly new world, the revelation of which is enough to transfigure an interior life. It is the metamorphosis experienced by St Teresa of the grub into the white butterfly. And the unanimous experience of the mystical saints—declaring that the contemplative states are windows of this new world—must take precedence over all *a priori* conceptions.[1]

NOTE ON APPENDIX V

HERE is the opinion expressed by an eminent theologian respecting *the direct apprehension of God.*

" We are careful not to accuse of ontologism those who maintain as probable the theory of a direct intuition, if only they insist on its confused and obscure character, thus rejecting the fundamental principle of ontologism, by affirming that the mind is only raised to God by being separated from creatures. . . . This accusation would be particularly unjust (an allusion to M. Saudreau) in regard to those who, like Mgr. Farges, maintain that contemplation takes place from its first degree by means of *impressed species*, and call it *direct*, because the impressed species is not *id quod videtur*, or even *id in quo videtur*, but *id quo res ipsa videtur*. This opinion may be criticized, but ontologism cannot be discovered therein " (Tanquerey, *Précis de théologie ascétique et mystique*, vol. ii, p. 972).

As regards ourselves, it belongs to the domain of philosophy to decide as to whether sensation (of the Divine) takes place by an *impressed species* without any *expressed species*, as we, in company with all Thomists, energetically maintain, or else by *expressed species* only, as Suarezians think. In the former case perception is direct, in the latter it cannot be other than mediate or by means of representation. To be convinced of this it is enough to have understood the Thomist theory of sensation and to admit its analogy with sensation of the Divine.

[1] See the discussion of the St Thomas Aquinas Society (*Revue de philosophie*, March-April, 1924).

APPENDIX VI

Reply of the Carmelite Congress of Madrid (March 1, 1923)

An event of great importance in the history of mystical theology has just taken place in the land of St Teresa, and our readers may be glad to have an account of it, together with a short commentary. This will be the best "Reply to Press Controversies."

On the occasion of the third centenary of the canonization of the Saint of Avila, and of the great national fetes in Spain in her honour, the Discalced Carmelite Fathers held a meeting in private committee, open to other religious orders for discussion, in which the main lines of the Teresian tradition concerning ascetic and mystical theology—so sharply disputed nowadays—were to be finally defined and proclaimed in such a way as rightly to influence study and the direction of souls in the mystical ways.

One hundred Spanish Discalced Carmelite Convents were represented there, and other religious came in great numbers, notably the Dominican Fathers, reputed to be opponents, such as Fathers Arintero, Albino, and many others.

The authority of such a Congress, then, in its definition of the principles of the Teresian School, cannot be contested.

Now after very long and at times very lively discussion, if we are to judge by the private accounts which reached us from Spain and from the Carmelite Fathers themselves, a certain number of doctrinal *conclusions* were voted by the Carmelites—it is said, unanimously—and made public by the *Mensajero de Santa Teresa* of Madrid, March 15, 1923.

In making a study of this official document, intended for the general public, we were first of all struck by the pacific and moderate tone of its fraternal charity which is maintained in it unceasingly from beginning to end.

Without ever referring to or condemning contrary opinions, they are content with calmly and definitely declaring in this document the teaching commonly received and approved by the Carmelite tradition.

Furthermore, they limited themselves to general and practical principles, omitting all scholastic or purely theoretical discussion, for we are expressly warned that "Teresian spiritual direction is not a theoretical and wholly scholastic direction, but one that is eminently practical" (Theme vii, 3).

Finally, a still greater proof of a general desire for peace and concord, the reporter himself points out in connection with the subject of the *Unity of the Spiritual Life* (Th. vii, note), that, " at the suggestion of the President he leaves out the reading of certain *conclusions*. . . ." Since he omits to tell us what these are, it is permissible to suppose that these conclusions reached by the Carmelite Fathers were of a nature likely to disturb that unity which is so desirable.

Whether this be so or whether this omission was by common consent, this document is none the less one that it is deeply interesting to study, because the conclusions clearly defined in it are of the highest importance, and the others, understood or half-veiled, are sufficiently transparent to be easily discovered by all acquainted with the mind of St Teresa.

Consequently this study has a double object in view. It will of necessity bring out clearly the teachings of the Teresian tradition definitely formulated by the Congress, and will in addition draw from it the conclusions logically contained therein in the light of the Saint's most sublime writings.

With this object we propose to follow the order of questions most useful to effect a solution of contemporary controversies, without touching on mystical principles which are beyond dispute, and therefore we do not bind ourselves to follow the order of the official text. In this spirit we shall limit ourselves to five questions of the greatest moment and interest: (1) The existence of acquired or active contemplation; (2) the nature of passive or infused contemplation; (3) the need or usefulness of passive contemplation; (4) the universal call to passive contemplation; (5) the desire for passive contemplation.

I. *Existence of active or " acquired " contemplation*

This expression " acquired contemplation," placed in inverted commas by the Congress (Theme iv, 7), clearly indicates that it is borrowed from current language, and is accepted without being claimed by the Congress as its own, for it is distasteful to many persons of very diverse and even contrary opinions.

It is, in fact, most ambiguous to call a state of the soul which does not possess the essentials of true contemplation by the name " contemplation," and then to qualify it as " acquired," whereas true contemplation is not acquired.

Nevertheless, in either psychological state we find a common or at least analogous element, the *simplex intuitus*, or simple

loving regard, without reasoning or discursiveness, and this superficial appearance has been enough to justify or at least to excuse the prevailing custom, not without a certain danger, of distinguishing the states only by different epithets.

It seems to us that it would have been more accurate to call them *prayers of simple regard*, one active and acquired, the other passive and infused, the latter only deserving the simple term contemplation. But this is merely a matter of words, and we conform, as does the Congress itself, to the custom.

This preliminary reserve once made, let us hasten to acknowledge that the first and most important question to be solved was that of the existence of two contemplations, acquired and infused, or of *two ways* of attaining to perfection: the one *active* and laborious, the other *passive* and short. Such is, in fact, the keystone of the arch of the whole mystical theory, and therefore of all contemporary controversy.

Two opposite opinions are known. According to some, and to the common teaching of theologians until recent times, the gifts of the Holy Ghost—the concurrence of which is needed for every act of merit, or at the very least for every perfect act, notably the gifts of wisdom and of understanding, necessary for every contemplative act—may have, and have in fact, two very different modes of operation: one ordinary, the other extraordinary.

The former is the instrument of a *co-operating* grace, which never completely suppresses the activity of the soul, the latter of a grace *operating alone*,[1] which suppresses it at least in the first stage, that of the *divine touch* and of *ligature* of the powers, more or less complete, immediately bringing about in the second stage the vital and meritorious acts of contemplation.

Hence the epithet *active* given to the first contemplation and *passive* to the second. Hence also the difference between the *active* and *passive ways* so clearly proclaimed in the document we are studying (Theme vii, 5, etc.).

According to others, on the contrary, it is "*impossible*" for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and therefore for those of intelligence and wisdom, to have two distinct modes not only of greater or lesser degree but also of nature, because, they say, there would then be two *habitus* of the same gift, which is inconceivable.

So that, from their point of view, there is *only one way* of

[1] *Cf.* St Thomas, I-II, q. ix, a. 6, ad 3; q. lxviii, a. 2; q. cxi, a. 2; III, q. xxxiv, a. 3.

attaining to perfection, and one only contemplation, and the distinction between the two contemplations is a new invention and a departure from tradition. Now if there be but one way of attaining to perfection, as we are all called to be perfect, we must all be called to contemplation. The call to contemplation then would be universal and in no way a privileged exception.

The consequences, as will be seen, are so serious that we cannot possibly record the conclusions of the Congress without having justified them, at least very briefly, for it seems to us superfluous to begin this endless controversy again *ab ovo*.

We will therefore draw this short summary, with the author's permission, from a masterly letter from his Eminence Cardinal Billot, who briefly sums up the whole question with great clearness. After making an energetic protest against the thesis of *Contemplation accessible to all*, he adds:

" With regard to the strange principle which is their starting point, ' that it is clear that each of the gifts cannot have two distinct modes towards the attainment of one end, not only of degree but of kind; that there would thus be two *habitus* specifically distinct; that the first would develop in vain without ever reaching the second,' and so on, it is the most hazardous statement that could possibly be made. For, independently of the reasons which you have so pertinently brought forward, it would only be necessary to refer them to the universally received doctrine concerning the *habitus* of the virtues. Is it not a different *habitus* of charity, for instance, which operates *in via* and *in patria ;* or would it be claimed that *charitas patriae* only differs in degree from *charitas viae ?* St Thomas teaches, on the contrary, that: *Charitas viae, quantumcumque crescat, nunquam potest adaequari charitati patriae, sicut linea nunquam attingit quantitatem superficiei* (II-II, q. 24, a. 7). And Cajetan gives the good reason for this that: *alterius rationis est perfectio illa.* The same observation may be made as regards the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, which all remain in beatitude, although *ad alios actus ac nunc, statui termini convenientes.* See on this subject St Thomas, art. 4 of the disputed question *De virtutibus cardinalibus*, and very particularly ad 6, in which, to the difficulty that *si sunt actus diversi, erunt et habitus specie differentes*, he replies categorically that *non omnis differentia actuum demonstrat diversitatem habituum, sicut dictum est in corpore articuli.*

[The *habitus* remains the same when it tends to the same end, although by acts of different species.]

And how many other things might be said against the claim that one and the same gift cannot have two different modes, one ordinary, the other extraordinary. But this is not the place, the more so in that you have put this point in a way which leaves nothing to be desired."

This argument of the learned Cardinal seems to us to be unanswerable, and it is easy to conceive that the same gift tending to one same end and preserving the same nature, may endow the soul with a suppleness and a passiveness, at times partial beneath the action of *co-operating* grace and at others total beneath the action of *grace operating alone*. The latter case of total passiveness is, so to speak, a *final stage* of this predominance, more or less great, of divine action over human action which characterizes the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

It results from this that the sound Thomist is perfectly justified *a priori* in placing contemplation in a difference either of *degree* or of *mode* of the gifts of understanding and wisdom. And, as is shown *a posteriori* according to the unanimous descriptions of the mystical saints, the necessity for noting a difference, not of greater or lesser degree, but of nature, between the states of the ordinary life, including the prayer of simplicity, and those of the mystical and contemplative life, certainly requires the seeking for the principle elsewhere than in a difference of degree and the admitting of a difference of mode in the exercise of the gifts.

There are then two quite distinct modes in the functioning of the same gifts, as in the grace itself which moves them, which at times is *co-operating*, at others *operating alone*.

Now the Carmelite Congress, in which the one hundred convents represented were unanimously agreed, voted in favour of the distinction between the two active and passive contemplations or ways, and it even took care to mark their border line by placing in the domain of active contemplation only the two prayers of *simple regard* and *active recollection*, leaving out from it all the others—that is to say, the four last *Moradas* of St Teresa: quiet, with passive recollection which is its antechamber, full union, ecstasy, and spiritual marriage, which consequently form the only stages of passive contemplation (Th. iv, 7).

This rectifying of the frontiers is evidently aimed at the opinion expressed by some rare writers, even among the

Carmelites, who were willing to class Quiet in the domain of active contemplation on the pretext that the ligature of the faculties (will, understanding, and imagination) is not yet complete, since it only becomes so in full union. But it suffices for Quiet to be completely independent of our will and of our initiative for it to be called wholly passive beneath the divine touch, even though the ligature be not complete.[1] The teaching of St Teresa appears to us to be decisive on this important point and cannot be tampered with without danger, for this would be to render Quiet accessible to all, like the prayers of *recollection* and *simple regard*, and thereby to run the risk of renewing one of the errors of the Quietists.[2]

These two opinions might be reconciled by distinguishing, with Father Meynard and many others, between two kinds of Quiet. The first, which I shall call a *semi-quiet*, is the natural term of acquired contemplation, since, according to St Thomas in the wake of Aristotle, it is an *epiphenomenon* of every perfect act which tends to repose and satisfaction. But since it depends on our initiative and on our will, like acquired contemplation itself, it is not passive. The second, the *true quiet*, that of the four *Moradas*, depends in no way on our will or initiative any more than does the infused recollection which precedes it, and in this sense it alone is wholly passive. It alone also possesses the other essential marks of true contemplation, but there is no need to insist on this here: it is enough for us that the Carmelite Congress has left Quiet outside the sphere of the active ways, and above all that it has made a clear distinction between the active and the passive ways (Th. iv, 7, and Th. vii, 5).

II. *The nature of passive or infused contemplation.*

The second important question is to define the nature of passive contemplation in order to enable us to distinguish it from active.

Doubtless these are already distinguished by activity and passivity, but as all passivity is not necessarily contemplation the difficulty remains, and we have still to make clear in what it essentially consists.

[1] Infused contemplation is said to be *perfect* or *imperfect* according to whether the suspension of the powers be total or partial. But it is *infused* or *acquired* according as to whether it is or is not completely independent of our will.

[2] See Fr. Dudon, S.J., *Michel Molinos*, pp. 260, 265.

Does the Congress define it as a more eminent *degree* of the gifts of the Holy Ghost? This does not, in its eyes, seem to be sufficient to establish a specific difference between the ascetic and mystical ways. Does it bring out prominently the *superhuman* character of the gifts? But they all possess this character, and the martyrs, by exercising the gift of fortitude in a superhuman manner, were not mystics on that account alone. We must then, *without eliminating either the predominance of the gifts or their superhuman mode*, seek in addition those particular gifts which intervene in contemplation, and their mode of operation.

Are these gifts those which have as their subject the *heart*—that is to say, the volitional and affective faculties—as is claimed by the *school of the heart;* or on the contrary—without disparaging the immense concurrence of the heart and of love in contemplation—those which have as subject the understanding, as St Thomas with the intellectualist school maintains?

Now the Congress does not hesitate from the very beginning to declare (Theme v, 2) that contemplation is above all an intellectual knowledge—not an abstract or discursive knowledge—but "*the experimental knowledge of divine things or realities produced supernaturally by God in the soul*," a formula that is equivalent to the *spiritual sensation of the divine*, analogous with the sensations of the outward senses or with the innermost sense, the only instrument of experimental knowledge we possess.[1] From this sensation of the divine action in our souls comes the *sense of presence*, the characteristic note of contemplation. The sober precision of this clear-cut formula is very definite.

First of all we may remark that it re-echoes St Teresa,[2]

[1] We would note that this formula is equivalent to that of Fr. Bainvel: *conscious and objective sensation of the supernatural within us;* and to our own; the *conscious and objective sensation of the action of God within us*. They are distinguished as the explicit from the implicit. We would also note that this definition is that of contemplation itself and not of the mystical phenomena which precede, accompany, or immediately follow it, such as the mystical *Nights*, in which the *sense of the presence of God* is occasionally changed to a sense, at least apparent, of *absence:* this is a trial—or rather a contemplation not yet fully evolved, but one in germ and in potentiality; now the potentiality can only be defined by its act, and the germ by the species that springs from it.

[2] "Our Lord *will* now [in this supernatural or mystical prayer] have the soul to see, as it were, with the naked eye, as men speak, this particular help of grace" (*Life*, ch. xiv). It is therefore an

St John of the Cross, Benedict XIV, St Thomas, and, it may be said, all the great mystics,[1] beginning with the prince of mystics, the famous Dionysius, *παθὼν θεία, patiens divina :* it is an experimental sensation of the divine.

Secondly, we at once grasp the essential difference between true contemplation and prayer of simplicity. The former experiences the presence of divine reality by a supernatural, mystical, spiritual sensation: it is a *theopathic* state. The latter imagines this presence, and, in fact, only contemplates the abstract content of the concepts of reason and faith. It *thinks* of God, whilst true contemplation claims to *feel* and to experience his presence in his action in the soul.

Thirdly, we note that the Congress, in its formulas of studied preciseness, does not say *quasi-experimental knowledge* of an absent object known by induction only, but a truly experimental knowledge. It is not that it wishes to exclude from contemplation all *quasi-experimental* knowledge ascending by inductive reason from divine effects to a divine cause indirectly experienced, neither does St Thomas exclude it, but he makes of it a *secondary* object *preparatory* to contemplation properly so-called, which is chiefly a truly experimental knowledge of this presence and of these divine actions in our souls. *Cognitio divinorum effectuum*, says the holy Doctor, secundario *ad vitam contemplativam pertinet, prout sc. ex hoc* manuducitur *homo in Dei* (*in se ipso*) *cognitionem* (II-II, q. clxxx, a. 4; q. clxxiv, a. 5; *In III*, dist. xxxv, q. 5, a. 1; q. 1, a. 2). The same distinction between these two forms of knowledge, by *presence* and by *effects*, direct and indirect, will be found in St Teresa.[2] Just as in psychology there are sensations that are direct, others indirect, derived and secondary.[3]

" experimental knowledge " or " sensation of the Divine." The reasoning comes afterwards to probe the nature of the object confusedly perceived.

[1] There is the same definition in Dionysius the Carthusian : *Cognitio experimentalis de Deo . . . mentibus puris illapsa* (*Opera omnia*, Tornaci, 1892, vol. 41, p. 257, *De contemplatione*).

[2] " [The reality of this union with God] becomes more manifest *by its effects* as time goes on. . . There is a Sun whence this brilliant light streams forth " (*Castle*, 7th M., ch. ii).

[3] The definition of contemplation recently given by M. Saudreau (*Ami du Clergé*, March 8, 1923, p. 151), *light and infused love obtained without reasoning*, is therefore inadmissible for many motives: (1) All graces, even light and love, are infused. (2) The exclusion of reasoning is to be found in all natural or supernatural practices, acquired or infused, and therefore in all supernatural instincts of the gifts and

It is true that the philosophical schools do not agree among themselves on the theory of organic sensation, to which all theologians have compared by analogy the spiritual sensation of the divine. But the Congress, without condemning any opinion, points out to us the way with sufficient clearness.

According to the Cartesian School sensation is only a subjective emotion agreeable or disagreeable interpreted at once by the intelligence in a more or less instinctive way. Whence certain theologians have concluded that contemplation was only an *affective state* merely accompanied by an indirect knowledge of its divine Cause.

Thomists, on the contrary, strongly maintain that sensation is first of all an *intuitive* knowledge of the things which strike us, so that we know them directly, not indeed in their essence, but in their outward actions, or in their qualities in *secondary action.* In this opinion, which is classical, the contemplative soul without ever seeing the *essence* of God perceives within itself or has consciousness both of his real presence and his grace. In the same way that in apprehending my actual thought I apprehend at the same time, and with the same regard, the *ego* which thinks, without, however, discovering its nature or its essence. *Simul enim dum videtur effectus*, says St Thomas, *videtur et causa in ipso . . . est visio utriusque. . . . Haec cognitio non est discursiva* (*sed intuitiva*) *. . . una videt Deum in alia* (*C. Gent.*, III, c. 49, 1).

So that it is permissible to say, as the holy Doctor has ventured to do, that " the eye that is rendered pure *sees God* (in the divine touch) *at least in a certain manner*"—that is to say, by a vision intermediate between the face-to-face vision of the blessed and human vision in the mirror of abstract concepts. *In hac etiam vita, purgato oculo per donum intellectus, Deus quodammodo videri potest* (I-II, q. lxix, a. 2, ad 3). It is the gift of understanding that is able to enjoy this intuition, and the gift of wisdom rather to taste the effects of the divine presence and action.

To sum up. For some, the sense of the presence of God is never other than the conclusion from an inference, more or less immediate, from effects to their cause; for others it is, at least

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even of the virtues. (3) This would be then to confuse infused contemplation with acquired (moreover the writer rejects this distinction) and to confuse mysticism with the ordinary ways. (4) Finally, it would be to exclude from the normal ways of mysticism—as exceptional—that *truly experimental knowledge* which is essential to it, so that their mysticism, as we have already said, would end almost where ours begins.

in true contemplation, a veritable intuition of the divine touch and of the presence of the divine Agent in his very action. The reader therefore may choose between " direct inference " and " immediate sensation " of the presence of God; and he will doubtless find that, the difference being negligible, the Congress did well to leave the solution of it to metaphysics.[1]

But there is a point of the greatest importance, on which all philosophers fall into line; namely, that all sensation is *passive* and that it passes through two phases. The first is *completely passive* beneath the action of the object which strikes us, the second is a vital reaction of knowledge and of affection, which is only called passive in the causes which have produced it. It is the same with the sensation of the divine; its first phase is *wholly passive* beneath the divine touch, and of itself *in se* is in no way meritorious. " God does all," says St Teresa, our part is nothing; but this total passiveness is the source of the greatest merits by the vital acts of acquiescence and love of which it is the occasion.

With these philosophical data it is no longer impossible to understand the *two ways* which St Teresa is so careful to distinguish[2]: the one *passive*, due to the wholly passive sensation of the divine; the other *active*, deprived of this sensation. Without these data, on the contrary, these two different ways of action of the same gifts of the Holy Ghost will never be understood, and *complete* passiveness will remain devoid of meaning, whereas it is the specific element in true contemplation or the sensation of the divine, and is the central point of all mysticism.

[1] See *Part I, Second Section*, pp. 258 ff.

[2] " With the assistance of God's [co-operating] grace we can help ourselves to a certain extent in these two matters [active prayer]; not so in contemplation [quiet]: this is beyond our natural powers, and he does all, for it is his work [grace operating of itself]" (*Way*, ch. xxv). " We can take no active part in this work of God within us . . . [The soul] does no more than does the wax when impressed with the signet. . . . How good thou art, O God! All is done for us by thee, who dost but ask us . . . that we may be as plastic as wax in thy hands " (*Castle*, 5th M., ch. ii). Note that this is not a case of " supereminent " contemplation, as has been said, but of the first degree of contemplation (Quiet), and therefore of the very essence of contemplation. Likewise St John of the Cross: " The soul must be lovingly intent upon God without distinctly eliciting other acts beyond those to which he inclines it . . . it must deal with him in the way of receiving " (*Living Flame*, st. iii, v. 3). *Cf.* St Alphonsus Liguori, *Homo apostol.*, Appendix I, 6; Bossuet, *États d'Oraison*, bk. vii. To venture, as has been done, to disqualify St Alphonsus and Bossuet in this connection is to have misunderstood them.

III. *Necessity or usefulness of passive contemplation*

It is easy to infer, from the intimate nature of contemplation such as it has been defined, its eminent perfection; moreover the eulogies of the Congress in its honour are endless.

" It is the mystical operation *par excellence*. It is the state of nearest approach to and closest union between the soul and God that can be attained in this life. It is, in the order of means, the highest ideal, as also the last stage of the Christian life, in souls called to mystical union with God. It is characterized by the increasing predominance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and by the superhuman mode with which it produces the accomplishment of all our good actions.[1] As all the virtues find their final perfection in the gifts, and as the latter reach their most perfect state in contemplation, it follows that this is the most ordinary (not necessary) way of sanctity and of habitually heroic virtue " (Th. v, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

The effects of contemplation make its usefulness still more noticeable.

" It is the spring which waters the virtues, causes them to grow and to reach their final perfection. It imprints its superhuman modality on our actions. It causes self-love and vainglory completely to disappear, to the extent that, being dead to ourselves, Christ alone lives within us " (Th. vi, 1, 2, 3, 4). All these eulogies cannot be contested and are not disputed, and we shall therefore limit ourselves to three important remarks.

[1] Separated from that which precedes and follows it, this phrase might seem to be borrowed from the language of our opponents and to make a concession to them; but it is inseparable. The " predominance of the gifts " is only a generic characteristic of contemplation, which from the very beginning was specified as being *experimental knowledge*. The phrase which follows at once explains the thought of the Congress: in the same way, it says, that the gifts are not simply a predominant degree of the virtues, but a very different complement, so also contemplation is not a degree but a complementary mode of the gifts. And it is very easy to see that the exercise of the highest gifts may nevertheless be deprived of the said " experimental knowledge," or that it is thus possible to have non-mystical saints, although this is not ordinary. With these safeguards the pretended " concession " was then free from danger. To the predominance of the gifts must be added the new mode which produces the passive and experimental sensation of the divine and transforms the active ways into the passive and mystical ways. In the same way, the " superhuman mode " of the gifts again is only a generic and not specific characteristic of contemplation. All the gifts are " superhuman."

The first is this: Since contemplation is declared to be " the highest ideal . . . the state of nearest approach to and greatest union between God and the soul that can be attained in this life "—the Congress rejects by this very statement the so-called *angelic state* of which some have thought to make a state far above contemplation and still nearer to God—when all the elements of it belong, on the contrary, to the domain of contemplation, and cannot be detached therefrom without an amputation which disfigures it and snatches from it precisely that which is most characteristic of it and most beautiful.

The second remark is that all these advantages described belong to the " order of means " to attain to sanctity and are not sanctity itself. It does not suffice to enter into so perfect a state in order to become perfect. Far from it; it is only a wonderful instrument of perfection, and we have seen, according to St Teresa, whose testimony is amply confirmed by history, that very imperfect persons have received these graces of the passive ways, at least in a passing manner, in order by their means to be sanctified more quickly.[1]

The third remark is more important. The Congress constantly speaks of the *utility* of contemplation in order to attain to sanctity, and never of its *necessity*. It declares that it is *in fact* the *ordinary way* at least of supereminent or " habitually heroic " virtue, but by no means the *necessary way*. On the contrary, with St Teresa it expressly makes the reserve of all " the other possible ways " known and unknown (Th. vii, 4).[2] " Consequently," the document adds, " it is, in the order of means, the highest ideal and a kind of final stage of the Christian life in this world." But let us note well this reserve, " in souls which are called to the mystical union with God " (Th. v, 3), for all souls are not called to perfection by the passive ways.

It is then a manifest exaggeration, rejected by the Congress, to maintain that passive contemplation is *necessary* to sanctity. In this it faithfully follows the main teaching of St Teresa, who has formulated it time and again with an insistence worthy of note, especially in the *Interior Castle*, which contains her complete mystical experience, and to which she herself refers us to

[1] " God knows that he can attract certain souls to himself by means of divine favours . . . therefore, though they are in a bad case . . he . . . sometimes raises them to contemplation, although but rarely and for a very short time " (*Way*, ch. xvi).

[2] Thus, for instance, for the martyrs the heroic effusion of blood is a still " shorter cut " towards perfection than contemplation: *Mortis sacrae compendio*, as the Church sings.

rectify or make more definite her earlier writings. Now in this work she returns at least *four* times to the fundamental principle that passive contemplation is not necessary to sanctity, and it will therefore be useful for us to give some quotations.

In the third Mansion she anticipates in order to warn us that "perfection does not consist in *consolation* but in greater love; our reward will be in proportion to this, and to the justice and sincerity of our actions. Perhaps you wonder, then, why I treat of these interior favours and their nature. . . . When these joys are from God they come laden with love and strength, which aid the soul on its way and increase its good works and virtues. Do not imagine that it is unimportant whether you try to obtain these graces or no; if you are not to blame, the Lord is just; what he refuses in one way, his majesty will give you in another, as he knows how; his secret ways are very mysterious, and doubtless he will do what is best for you" (3rd M., ch. ii).

The same teaching had already been developed in the *Way of Perfection* (ch. xviii) in terms not less noteworthy.

"The best sign that anyone has made progress is that she thinks herself the last of all and proves it by her behaviour. . . . This is the true test; not *sweetness in prayer* (of Quiet), ecstasies, visions, and other divine favours of the same kind. The value of these latter we cannot estimate rightly until the next life, but the former are current coin, a constant revenue and a perpetual inheritance, not mere part-payments which, when acquitted, cease. . . . You must not be distressed if you do not experience these other devotional feelings which are unreliable. Although in the case of other people they may come from God, yet in yours he might permit them to be an illusion of the devil, who would mislead you as he has misled others. . . . Why run into danger in serving our Lord when there are so many safe ways of doing so? Who wants you to incur such risk? There is need for much insistence on this point because we are weak by nature. . . . I am glad to have given this advice to other persons: it will also animate those called to the contemplative life to practise humility."[1]

In the fourth Mansion (ch. ii.), which according to her teaching

[1] St Teresa expressly states that God treats those that are deprived of contemplation as *strong souls;* that "these graces are sent to strengthen our weakness so that we may imitate him by suffering much" (*Castle*, 7th M., ch. iv; *Way*, ch. xviii and xix). She adds: "I have often told you this." It is therefore indeed a "short cut" or "cross-road," and not the path to be followed of necessity.

is the first of the mystical life, *Quiet*, she thus consoles those nuns who, in spite of their goodwill and without their own fault, have not received the gift of passive Quiet:

"His majesty has not promised to give us these favours in the same way as he has bound himself to bestow eternal glory on us if we keep his commandments. We can be saved without these special graces; he sees better than we do what is best for us. . . . Our monasteries need sisters to do the work of Martha as well as that of Mary."

This startling comparison has also been developed in the *Way*, ch. xvii.

"As I told you, it is important to understand that his majesty does not lead all souls in the same way. . . . Thus it does not follow, because all the nuns in this convent practise prayer, that they must all be contemplatives. Such an idea would greatly discourage those who do not understand the truth that contemplation is a gift of God which is not necessary for salvation nor for earning our eternal reward, nor does anyone here require us to possess it. She who is without it, yet who follows the counsels that I have given, will attain great perfection. It may be she will gain far more merit, as she has to work harder on her own account. . . . In a way, such souls are safer. . . . Nor need you doubt that you may become as perfect as the greatest contemplatives. St Martha was holy, though we are never told she was a contemplative. . . . If she had always been enraptured like the Magdalen, there would have been no one to offer food to this divine Guest. . . . Let not the nun who is called to the active life murmur at others who are absorbed in contemplation . . . remember that someone must cook the food, and think yourself favoured by being allowed to serve with Martha. . . . Leave that to the Master of the house; he is wise and powerful and knows what is best for you and for himself. . . . What a gain is ours if, for fear of losing by it, we do not seek to gain by what we think is best!"

In the fifth Mansion, that of *full union*, our Saint returns to the same subject of the *two ways* so dear to her heart, by contrasting mystical and passive union, characterized by the suspension of the powers, which does not last "for half an hour," with active and non-mystical union, the only one necessary for perfection.

"The advantage of entering this mansion (full union) is so great, that it is well that none should despair of doing so because God does not give them the supernatural

gifts described above. With the help of divine grace *true union* can always be attained by forcing ourselves to renounce our own will and by following the will of God in all things. Oh, how many of us affirm that we do this, and believe we seek nothing else—indeed, we would die for the truth of what we say? If this be the case I can only declare, as I fancy I did before, and I shall again and again, that we have already obtained this grace from God. Therefore we need not wish for that other delightful union described above, for its chief value lies in the resignation of our will to that of God without which it could not be reached. Oh, how desirable is this union! . . . Is it necessary, in order to attain to this kind of divine union, for the powers of the soul to be suspended [as in mystical union]? No; God has many ways of enriching the soul and bringing it to these mansions besides what might be called a 'short cut' [the suspension of the powers]. But be sure of this, my daughters: in any case the silkworm (self-love) must die and it will cost you more in this way. In the former manner this death is facilitated by finding ourselves introduced into a new life: here, on the contrary, we must give ourselves the death-blow. I own that the work will be much harder, but then it will be of higher value so that your reward will be greater if you come forth victorious. . . . *This is the* [non-mystical] *union I have longed for all my life and that I beg our Lord to grant me:* it is the most certain and the safest. But alas, how few of us ever obtain it! . . . may his majesty give us the grace to merit union with him; it is in our power to gain it if we will."[1]

Finally, in the sixth Mansion, that of ecstasy, in ch. ix, our Saint returns again for the fourth time to this fundamental teaching of the two ways, and to the non-necessity of the mystical way for sanctity, although the passive way is assuredly the sweetest, the easiest, and the shortest.

[1] This text is so decisive that the opponents of the two ways have attempted to annul it by maintaining that the "short cut" in question might be ecstasy or the beginning of ecstasy. But the context does not allow of this. On the one hand the Saint only speaks of ecstasy in the Mansion which follows, and on the other hand, by the "short cut of which I have spoken," she herself refers to what she has just said in the preceding chapter on *mystical union* which suspends the powers. "Oh, how great God is! How beautiful is the soul after having been immersed in God's grandeur and united closely to him for but a short time! Indeed, I do not think it is ever as long as half an hour" (ch. ii).

" Know," she says, " that for having received many favours of this kind, you will not merit more glory, but be the more stringently obliged to serve, since you have received more. God does not deprive us of anything by which we merit more, for this remains in our own control. There are many saints who never knew what it was to receive one such favour, while others who have received them are not saints at all."

In this last passage, it is true, the Saint speaks of certain passive graces still more extraordinary, although they are frequent in this Mansion, such as visions and apparitions, but the general principle remains applicable to all *passive* graces. They do not constitute sanctity, but facilitate it and shorten the road in a truly marvellous manner. In this same chapter St Teresa herself thus explains this:

" How much more must anyone fear this to whom our Lord so revealed himself in vision here as to overcome her feelings and produce unconsciousness! This must be the reason that the soul remains in a rapture; our Lord *strengthens its weakness* so as to unite it (more easily) to his greatness in this sublime communion with God."

Although there may be two ways leading to perfection, the one active, slow and ordinary, the other passive, short and extraordinary, this does not prevent there being more or less frequent communications between them. As St Teresa observes: " God . . . did not say: ' Let some men come to me by drinking this water, but let others come by some other means.' "[1] Those vowed to the active life are not excluded from occasionally drinking at the fountain of passive graces, but that is an accidental fact which does not transform their active vocation to a contemplative one.[2]

This wondrous diversity of vocations and of the corresponding natural aptitudes is a fact willed by God because it is necessary to every living being, when it is perfect, as is the mystical body of Christ, to have a great variety of functions and organs tending all towards the unity of the same life. There is then not one single way, one single function, one single system willed by God, that of the contemplative life, from which all other vocations would be fallings short or accidental variations. The great law of life is variety in unity, and the great

[1] *Way*, ch. xxi.

[2] Just as one swallow does not make a summer, so one or two Quiets are not enough to make a contemplative (*Castle*, 4th M., ch. iii).

law of perfection is that each one sanctifies himself in his own vocation and by fitting means. The ideal unity proposed to us, therefore, is a false ideal, that of uniformity.

All this fundamental teaching concerning the *duality of the ways, active and passive*, and the non-necessity of passive contemplation for sanctity, is found very explicitly developed in the work of a holy Doctor of the Church, St Alphonsus Liguori, in the famous *Praxis Confessarii* (n. 136), who states therein that he follows faithfully the teaching of St Teresa. Now it is to the study of this that the Carmelite Congress refers us with noteworthy insistence: " No confessor or director," it declares, " ought to be unacquainted with the treatise *Praxis Confessarii*, in which is recapitulated all the mystical and ascetic doctrine of St Teresa and St Francis " (Th. viii, 1). The Congress therefore makes the teaching which we have just set forth its own, since it is found to be proclaimed therein so clearly and so vigorously—although it has not had the good fortune to be acceptable to all among our contemporary mystical writers.[1]

IV. *The universal call to passive contemplation*

The thesis of the universal call, at least remote, to contemplation, and that of " the heights of contemplation accessible to all,"[2] which is the logical outcome of it, were, it will be remembered, the two twin theses the appearance of which, some years ago, astonished and greatly startled the specialists versed in the study of mysticism. According to these, as to St Teresa, mystical states, on the contrary, were those of the spiritual life impossible to be acquired by personal effort, prayer or merit, however great: *no se puede adquirir* (Second Letter to Fr. Rodrigo

[1] We are delighted to see the *Vie spirituelle* (March, 1923), at the suggestion of M. Maritain, accept the duality of the ways towards perfection—it is true, under a somewhat new label: *mystical* ways and *contemplative* ways. We do not wish to appear to quarrel with words, none the less we prefer to abide by the classical distinction, approved by the Carmelite Congress, into *active* and *passive* ways. It expresses better that the gifts of the Holy Ghost have two very different modes of operation, and that the mode which introduces an entirely passive element in which " God does all " alone merits the name mystical. Here we have a " progressive agreement " on which we congratulate ourselves.

[2] We are pleased to learn that Fr. Arintero has just suppressed the sub-title to his work which caused such excitement: *The heights of contemplation accessible to all.*

Alvarez). And the mystics themselves, adds our Saint, will find therein occasion for humility (*Way*, ch. xvii).

The new doctrine therefore has been a great surprise. Cardinal Billot, eminent theologian as he is, re-echoed these alarms when he wrote with his customary frankness these severe words which I am authorized to reproduce.

" In my opinion, to put forward the theory that the heights of contemplation are accessible to all, there must be a lack of the most elementary notion of what constitutes mystical contemplation. It is so much so that it is difficult to believe that the idea of our opponents is really what we understand or think we understand it to be."

The views to be expressed by the Congress on so disturbing a doctrine as that of a universal call to passive contemplation, at once the most critical and the most crucial point with those who were opposed to it, were therefore awaited with very natural curiosity.

Well, the Congress, pushing its desire for peace to the extreme limit, said nothing whatever, and passed the question by in silence, content with having clearly and firmly established principles opposed to and irreconcilable with it.

The first of these principles is this: Contemplation is a gift of God (wholly gratuitous), and as such can only be obtained through his mercy (Th. v, concl. 1). St Teresa had already stated, in speaking of Quiet, the first degree of passive contemplation: " God gives when, how, and to whom he wills—the goods are his own, and his choice wrongs no one " (*Castle*, 4th M., ch. i), and she made use of this consideration, as we have already seen, to console those of her daughters, who, without any fault on their part, had not received this gift—as well as to render humble those who had received it. All, then, are not called to it.

The second principle is formulated thus: " Dispositions to contemplation are not efficacious in themselves except in so far as they overthrow obstacles and draw down the mercy of God " (Th. v, concl. 2). Now it is precisely the contrary as regards all the ends to which we are called, such as salvation and the beatific vision. Here, from the very fact of our call, means sufficient to reach the end are due to us, and God could not refuse us them without contradiction. We can therefore acquire them efficaciously and with certainty by our merits and by our prayers.

The third principle is that " Contemplation is only an ideal

in the order of means . . . for souls called to mystical union with God" (Th. v, concl. 3). It is not, then, the ideal *end* of perfection to which we are all called, but only an ideal *means* whereby to attain to it. It is a wonderful means of locomotion, a pair of wings which bear us easily and rapidly to the heights; but these wings are not necessarily given to all. The contemplative ways are, in the Church, a special vocation like that of Mary Magdalen, as St Teresa tells us, and she adds this not less expressive comparison: Contemplatives, she says,[1] are like the standard-bearers in a battle. Without themselves fighting, they have the honour of carrying the standard and sounding the rally; but it is quite impossible for all the soldiers to be standard-bearers.

Doubtless this privilege is not reserved for one caste only. Contemplatives are to be found in every profession, civil or religious: no one is excluded. This is an undisputed principle recorded without discussion by the Congress (Th. v, concl. 4).

The only universal call, therefore, is that to the blessed contemplation of heaven, and sanctifying grace in our souls is already the germ of this glory, *semen gloriae*, but its blossoming before the time and the anticipation of heaven on earth through passive contemplation cannot be other than a gratuitous privilege.

Moreover, the facts are there to deny the opposing thesis. Benedict XIV,[2] like St Teresa, teaches us that all the saints are not contemplatives, and that a great number have been so only in a passing way or by exception. Now just as one or two swallows do not make a summer, so one or two ecstasies do not make a contemplative life, and are not enough to characterize a saint. And it is not only the facts of history which bear witness to this, but also the facts of every day. Quite recently again, the Abbot of the Trappist Monastery of Briquebec, Dom Vital Lehodey, whose name is looked on as authoritative in mysticism, declared to us that he had known three monks in France and Japan two of whom at least were certainly not contemplatives, yet who nevertheless had died in the odour of sanctity, and now performed real miracles. The universal call to contemplation, then, is a theoretical view denied by the facts.

[1] *Way*, ch. xviii.

[2] See *Part I, Second Section*, p. 243.

V. *The desire for passive contemplation*

This is merely a corollary to all that has been said. Nevertheless, this question was too practical to be omitted by the Congress, which had above all a practical end in view. It has therefore clearly given us the principle for its solution, whilst leaving the application of this in every case to the prudence of confessors.

This principle has two parts thus defined by the Congress.

" In the Mansions (of St Teresa's *Castle*) are to be met two orders of phenomena which are quite distinct. Some in which the soul moves itself by grace (co-operating grace), others in which the soul is moved supernaturally by God (operating grace, or in which *God does all*). The first the soul can and ought to obtain for itself *at all costs*, the second it can only obtain for itself indirectly by the exercise of the virtues, particularly that of humility (Th. vii, 5).

Let us first of all note that the distinction between the two ways, active and passive, could hardly be more clearly stated. The first, in which *co-operating* grace desires to incite our activity; the second, which begins as soon as grace *operating alone* appears, in which God wills to act himself.

Now the principles of conduct cannot be the same in both cases. In the active ways God asks us to co-operate generously and *at all costs* with his grace in order to attain to that Christian perfection to which we are all called, each one according to his vocation, and therefore the desire to become perfect is imposed on all. In the passive ways—and in the measure in which they are passive—God wills that we leave him to act without obstacle, and it is only here that the principle " leave God to act " holds good. Passive contemplation is no longer, as is active contemplation, within our own power. It is impossible for us to merit it either *de congruo* or *de condigno*, as the Congress declares from its first conclusion: " It is," it says, " a gift of God (purely gratuitous), and as such can only be obtained by mercy " (Th. v, 1).

Thus it can only be desired conditionally: *if such be the good pleasure of God*, and we are only able to render ourselves disposed for it indirectly, by the avoidance of obstacles, such as the slightest imperfections, and by the practice of those virtues which are most pleasing to God, such as humility and abandon-

ment to his good pleasure, which incline him more to grant his favour (Th. v, 2).

The desire for contemplation, with ardent prayer to obtain it, is not then forbidden by the Congress. On one condition, however: that this goes hand in hand with a deep humility and the other virtues, such as holy abandonment.

Now there is no difficulty for these to go hand in hand in all those souls who have felt already the call of God to contemplation by the three classic signs indicated by St John of the Cross. Whilst declaring themselves unworthy of so great a privilege, it is their duty henceforth to respond generously to this call.

But for those souls who have not yet received it, is it permissible to ask for it? The Congress leaves to us the task of answering the question by means of the principles propounded, and we must ask St Teresa herself to give more explicitly the reply.

Speaking of apparitions and visions in ch. ix of the sixth Mansion, and condemning the possible desire for them, she gives six reasons, two of which have a much more general application and may be used here. We reproduce her words.

"When you know or hear of God's bestowing these graces on others, never pray nor desire to be led by this way yourself, though it may appear to you to be very good; indeed, it ought to be highly esteemed and reverenced, yet no one should seek to go by it for several reasons. Firstly, *as it is a want of humility to desire what you have never deserved*, I do not think anyone who longs for these graces can be really humble."

But this is also certainly the case with contemplation, "which we have never merited," and, according to the Congress, are not even able to merit, because it is purely a gratuitous gift of God. If we go further and continue with our text, we shall find that such a desire might be not only contrary to humility, but also a want of confidence in God, a grave imprudence.

"Fourthly," adds St Teresa, "it would be very presumptuous of me to choose a way for myself without knowing what is good for me. I should leave our Lord, who knows my soul, to guide me as is best for me so that his will may be done in all things. . . . Believe me, it is safer to wish only what God wishes, who knows us better than we know ourselves and who loves us. Let us place ourselves entirely in his hands so that his will may be done in us."

Let us note the insistence of St Teresa, who repeats more than a hundred times that the passive ways are not always the

surest, because of the fear of illusions of the imagination or of the devil. Thus she forestalled the quietism of Molinos and the strange misuse which it must make of voluntary passiveness, in no way divine. And this wise distrust of the passive ways in so eminent a contemplative ought to be the best lesson for us. Let us await God's call and let us never forestall it!

St Teresa began to put in practice these wise counsels herself long before being raised to contemplation, and even, as she avows, "all her life."

In ch. iii of the fifth Mansion, that of *union*, after stating that perfect union may be obtained without passive or mystical union and without that complete suspension of the powers which characterizes it—although, it is true, more slowly and with greater difficulty—she adds:

"This is the (non-mystical) union which I have longed for all my life and that I beg our Lord to grant me; it is the most certain and the safest. But alas, how few of us ever obtain it!"

And it is not only *passive union* that our Saint wished never to ask of God, but a much less favour, that of *Quiet*. Treating of this first stage of passive mysticism, she makes this very noteworthy avowal:

"He sees better than we do what is best for us. . . . I know for a certain truth, being acquainted with some who walk by the way of love, and therefore only seek to serve Jesus Christ crucified, that not only they neither ask for nor desire consolation (Quiet), but they even beg him not to give it them during this life: *this is a fact.*"

Astonishing words, certainly, but heroically logical, once it is admitted that the passive states—however delightful these may be—are not necessary to sanctity, and that in asking for them we become exposed, says and repeats St Teresa, to our Lord's reply: *nescitis quid petatis* (*Way*, ch. xviii, repeated in *Castle*, 2nd M., ch. i).

The contrary theory to that expounded by St Teresa parts company with all other principles: it assumes that contemplation is necessary to perfection and sanctity, that there is but one way only, passive contemplation, which leads to them, and that as all are called equally to be perfect there must also be a universal call to contemplation, and consequently it may be merited *de congruo* like all necessary means to the same end, and therefore that it may be desired.

But none of these novel principles are to be found in the

definitions of the Congress, which, on the contrary, definitely excludes them.[1]

Far from us, however, as from the Congress, be the thought of wishing to condemn every kind of desire for the mystical ways in those souls who have not already heard the call of God expressed by the three classic signs. This would be to wish to impose on all that lofty and heroic indifference of which St Teresa has just given us an example, whereas this must remain only the highest and most perfect ideal.

Our Saint herself, in a great number of other texts, in which she speaks under different impressions, by a contradiction more apparent than real, permitted such desires in her Carmelite daughters and approved them, provided they were in keeping with deep humility and complete abandonment to the good pleasure of God.

First, *humility*—that is to say, full consciousness of our great unworthiness and a sole desire to see God more glorified within us. Then *complete abandonment*—that is to say, entire submission to the good pleasure of God, who is in no way bound by any promise to grant us the mystical gifts, since they are not the only way to attain to Christian perfection, even though we might prepare ourselves for them by removing every obstacle and by cultivating to the utmost the other gifts of the Holy Ghost.

It is clear that such a desire, both very humble and hypothetical—*if it be the good pleasure of God*—is in itself a very noble sentiment, and it is not a question of principle but of opportuneness.

For some it may be a powerful stimulus against faint-heartedness or spiritual idleness, and ought to be praised. For others, and they, according to St Alphonsus Liguori, the greater number, it would endanger humility and stimulate the imagination to harmful reveries. There is a risk in this desire of provoking expectation which, in turn, too often brings about illusions and even hallucinations, in accordance with the wise saying, " We easily believe what we desire."

[1] Here is similar advice from Fr. Lallemant: " Not only is there danger in a desire for rapture and ecstasy, in the wish to have visions and revelations in such raptures, but in the desire for ways other than those by which it pleases God to lead us. But there is no danger in asking for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, for his guidance, for solid virtues and a high form of prayer " (*La doctrine spirit.*, p. 470). In the same way St Francis de Sales: " *To ask nothing* (of ourselves) *and to refuse nothing* "—golden words that have become classic in asceticism and mysticism.

A wise director—whilst fully respecting certain exceptional desires which bear the stamp of the Spirit of God—will never force souls into the passive ways, but will, on the contrary, moderate all indiscreet desires, and will know how to await the manifestation of the call from on high. It suffices for interior souls to hold themselves *ever ready* to respond to this appeal—if such be the design of God—and the more and more perfect practice of the active ways is the only preparation within their power or that can with safety be counselled them.

CONCLUSION

BEFORE ending, let these conclusions reached by the Congress be compared with the doctrine of Benedict XIV and the common teaching of theologians for at least the last three centuries—putting on one side the oratorical complications of certain preachers who do not always refrain from hasty generalizations or pious exaggerations in order to inflame souls and uplift them towards the ideal—and we shall have great difficulty in discovering the slightest discordance: agreement is perfect on all fundamental points, such as the following:

1. The essential distinction between acquired and infused contemplation, and between the two ways, active and passive.

2. The nature of infused contemplation, which is that of being a truly experimental knowledge or spiritual sensation of the action and presence of God, *wholly passive*, since here *God does all* (p. 631).

3. Its essential gratuitousness, which does not render it accessible to all.

4. Its non-necessity for the highest sanctity, although it is the most ordinary way of it.

5. Finally, its precious advantages, which render it desirable, yet under certain conditions.

This complete agreement will be a real relief to the consciences of those fearsome souls who, in good faith, are afraid that the tradition of the last three centuries is only a *pseudo-tradition*, and that a " partial eclipse of the truth "—as one author has ventured to write—has so long afflicted the Church of God.

Let us thank the Congress for having freed these souls of little faith from so heavy a nightmare. Let us thank it, above all, for the immense service it has just rendered, both to pious

souls buffeted between contrary directions and to mystical science in the dangerous crisis through which it is passing, by thus codifying the fundamental principles of Teresian mysticism.

Henceforth it can no longer be said that the Teresian School has not fixed criteria, and that each at will may claim to belong to it. Before becoming honoured by the title, so universally coveted, of disciple of St Teresa, the principles and general directions given us by this memorable Carmelite Congress—with its indisputable authority of *witness* and *guardian* of the traditions and spirit of the Saint of Avila—must be sincerely accepted. It has thus responded to our most pressing needs and most ardent desires.

Henceforth we ourselves have the assurance of having to change nothing in our first position, and of having the right to claim citizenship with the Teresian School, as a master of mystical theology has recently declared it.[1] The free field which the Congress leaves for discussion by all Christian thinkers is still sufficiently wide to let us feel at ease and to put in practice the famous maxim: *In dubiis libertas, in omnibus charitas.*

Here is a translation (from Mgr. Farges' translation of the original) of the official document published by the *Mensajero de Santa Teresa* (pp. 21, 24), March 15, 1923. We italicize the passages on which we have commented.

CONCLUSIONS APPROVED BY THE TERESIAN CONGRESS

First Section: The Spiritual Life

Theme I. The necessity of the spiritual life

1. In the present order of Providence, practically the spiritual life is identified with the supernatural life; and its vital principle consists in union with God through grace.

2. The development of the spiritual life forms the proper and adequate perfection of man which is that perfection of state required of all by the divine Master, and consists in a blend-

[1] The Rev. Fr. Bainvel, Dean of Theology, Introduction to *Grâces d'Oraison*, p. xlvi, *Teresian Group*.

ing of the operations of the understanding and of the will moved and informed by the same grace.

3. Nothing is more desirable, more important and more necessary for man than his own life, and as this principally consists in the spiritual and supernatural life, we ought to affirm that it is an absolute necessity for man to live the spiritual life.

4. In conformity with the evangelical precepts and counsels and with sound theology, the spiritual life may be reduced chiefly, as stated by the great *Doctora*, to three great virtues—namely, humility, mortification, and charity, the two first as foundation and matter, the last as form.

5. This Congress proclaims with insistence the importance of promoting as much as possible, in seminaries and religious houses, ascetico-mystical studies, taking as a sure guide the great *Doctora*, St Teresa of Jesus.

Theme II. Usefulness of the teaching of St Teresa for Christian piety

1. The teaching of St Teresa is of unquestionable and invaluable usefulness for Christian piety, as is shown by the liturgical invocation of the Church on her feast-day: *Caelestis ejus doctrinae pabulo nutriamur et piae devotionis erudiamur affectu.*

2. The same conclusion is to be gathered from the qualities and characters of her teaching—solidity, order, purity, and simplicity.

3. It is in the highest degree opportune to edit her works separately and to spread them as widely as possible, more especially the *Way of Perfection*, the *Aspirations*, and the *Counsels and Thoughts*.

4. Writers of books of piety are recommended to enrich their writings with texts from Holy Scripture, from the saints, and from our mystics, especially from St Teresa.

5. The censors of pious books are urged in their zeal to censure with care books which breathe sentimentalism, either by their lack of solidity or by sugary expressions of fulsome and maudlin sentimentality, lacking in ascetic sense.

6. It would be very desirable, during one of the most frequented Masses, if a better occasion be lacking, to explain to the people the spirit of the Church expressed in her liturgy, so contrary to the softness, immodesty, worldly distractions, and other ruling vices which are so opposed to Christian piety.

Theme III. Vocal Prayer : its usefulness and St Teresa's manner of practising it

1. It is of supreme importance to train the people well in vocal prayer, as a discourse with God at once tender, gentle, and familiar, as St Teresa teaches.

2. A good means towards this will be to spread abroad St Teresa's commentary on the *Our Father*, adding thereto, by way of preface or notes, the counsels of the Saint as to the way to recite prayers fruitfully.

3. Let the endeavour in like manner be made to inspire the people with a love and preference for liturgical and traditional prayer in the Church and in Spain, particularly for the Rosary, this especially Spanish and Teresian devotion.

Theme IV. Methods of Prayer : Method of St Teresa

1. To labour to introduce the custom of taking mental prayer as a subject for preaching, in order to set forth the form and manner of performing it.

2. Let Confessors have care, when they judge it prudent and opportune, to give as penance, instead of certain prayers to be recited, a certain time for mental prayer on the Passion of our Lord.

3. To recommend all those consecrated to works connected with the Catholic apostolate to precede them always with prayer.

4. To labour in order that among those who frequent the sacraments that there should be none who omit a time of daily prayer and recollection, as St Teresa teaches and as she herself practised from childhood.

5. In order to do this each should make use of the method most useful for his soul, such as that of St Ignatius, Luis of Granada, and others; recommending, however, with St Teresa, the giving of greater time to affections and resolutions than to considerations and reasonings.

6. Those who have not yet begun to meditate should, in order to be attracted to this exercise, read frequently the works of St Alphonsus Liguori, St Francis de Sales, and other saints who treat of the subject, particularly St Teresa.

7. Those who from temperament or from the progress they have already made in perfection are not content with the discursive method, may make use of the *method called "acquired*

contemplation," according to one of the two forms recommended by St Teresa—that is to say, that of simple loving regard or that of interior recollection, in accordance with the facility they find and the profit experience enables them to draw therefrom.

Theme V. Contemplation: Manner of becoming disposed to it according to the teachings of the Doctora of Avila

1. *Infused contemplation is the mystical operation par excellence.*

2. *This contemplation is the experimental knowledge of divine things (or realities) produced supernaturally by God in the soul; and it is the closest state of intercourse and union between God and the soul that may be attained in this life.*

3. *Consequently it is, in the order of means, the highest ideal, and, as it were, the last stage of Christian life in this world, for those souls who are called to mystical union with God.*

4. *The contemplative state is characterized by the increasing predominance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and by the superhuman manner in which, by their aid, all our good actions are performed.*

5. *As the virtues find their final perfection in the gifts and the latter are perfected in contemplation, it follows that contemplation is the ordinary "way" of sanctity and of habitually heroic virtue.*

Conclusions on the dispositions to contemplation

1. *Infused contemplation is a gift of God, and it is solely in this sense that it is possible to attain to it through pure mercy.*

2. *Dispositions to contemplation are not efficacious in themselves except in so far as they remove obstacles and draw down the mercy of God.*

3. *The chief dispositions to contemplation are: detachment from all created things or purity of soul, humility, true charity, and perseverance in prayer.*

4. *These dispositions being accessible to every walk of life, contemplative souls may be found in them all.*

Theme VI. Usefulness of contemplation and its efficacy in the progress of virtue

1. *Contemplation is as it were the watering which strengthens the virtues and makes them grow, and in which they obtain their final perfection.*

2. *In the virtues perfected by means of contemplation grace is not only the supernatural principle of our good actions, but, wholly triumphant, it impresses on these same actions its own superhuman modality.*

3. *It is in this state of contemplation that every trace of self-love and vainglory disappears.*

4. *It is by contemplation that, being completely dead to ourselves, Christ alone lives within us.*

Theme VII. The unity of the spiritual life and its degrees according to the Mansions *of St Teresa*

1. Teresian spiritual direction synthesizes all tradition in its three essential degrees of the "purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways." It is, on the other hand, the most objective in accordance with the distinction of the degrees established by the Saint, which is founded on direct psychological observation.

2. Teresian spiritual direction is the most complete because it does not limit its attention to great spiritual states, but deals also with the smaller intermediate states, evolving from them without discontinuity. And, as the book of the *Mansions* is that in which the teachings of the Saint are best recorded, it should be recognized as the typical outline of the spiritual life and St Teresa as the mistress of true spirituality.

3. *Teresian spiritual direction is not a theoretical direction of the schools, but it is eminently practical*, because it does not content itself with the expounding of principles and the verification of degrees, but gives a multitude of counsels, proposes means, shows dangers, and possesses all the varied shades of a practical direction.

4. The end our holy Mother has in view in the composition of the *Mansions* is to explain the divers degrees through which a soul may pass until it reaches the highest manifestations of the mystical life, *without claiming to explain other possible roads of the spiritual life.*

5. *In the* Mansions *of our holy Mother are found two orders of phenomena, completely distinct: one in which the soul moves itself by the aid of grace, the other in which the soul is moved supernaturally by God. The former the soul must acquire at all cost, the latter the soul can only obtain indirectly by the exercise of the virtues, particularly humility.*

Note.—*On reaching this point, the Reporter, through lack of time and in obedience to an indication from the President, omitted to read the conclusions which concern the "unity of the spiritual life."*

Theme VIII. The conditions which should unite the director and the dispositions of the subject directed in order to obtain the greatest practical fruit from spiritual direction

1. *No confessor or director ought to be unacquainted with the* Praxis Confessarii *of St Alphonsus Liguori, in which are found summed up the whole mystical and ascetic teaching of St Teresa of Jesus, of St Francis de Sales, and of St Alphonsus himself.*

2. Spiritual direction is the ordinary road traced by divine Providence to bring souls to perfection. Souls who reject this means will with difficulty or never attain to it.

3. The foundation of the teaching being assumed, the National Teresian Congress declares that the chief key to the formation of directors of conscience, and to the progress of those directed, consists in the necessity for directors to know how to pray and to meditate well, and to teach the profitable practice of the gift of prayer.

Final wish. As interpreters of the aspirations of the Spanish people, made known in a thousand ways during this centenary, and in view of the promotion of truly spiritual life in souls, the Teresian Congress humbly prays His Holiness to deign to proclaim St Teresa of Jesus Mystical Doctor of the Church. In this we are animated by the desire shown forth by the Church that "we may be nourished by the food of her heavenly teaching and instructed in the affection of her pious devotion," according to the liturgical prayer for the feast of the Saint.

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[1] For fuller details see Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer* (Eng. ed., pp. 591 *et seq.*); and the very complete bibliography, in 37 pages, of Fr. Scheuer, in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, July, 1923, and January, 1924.

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